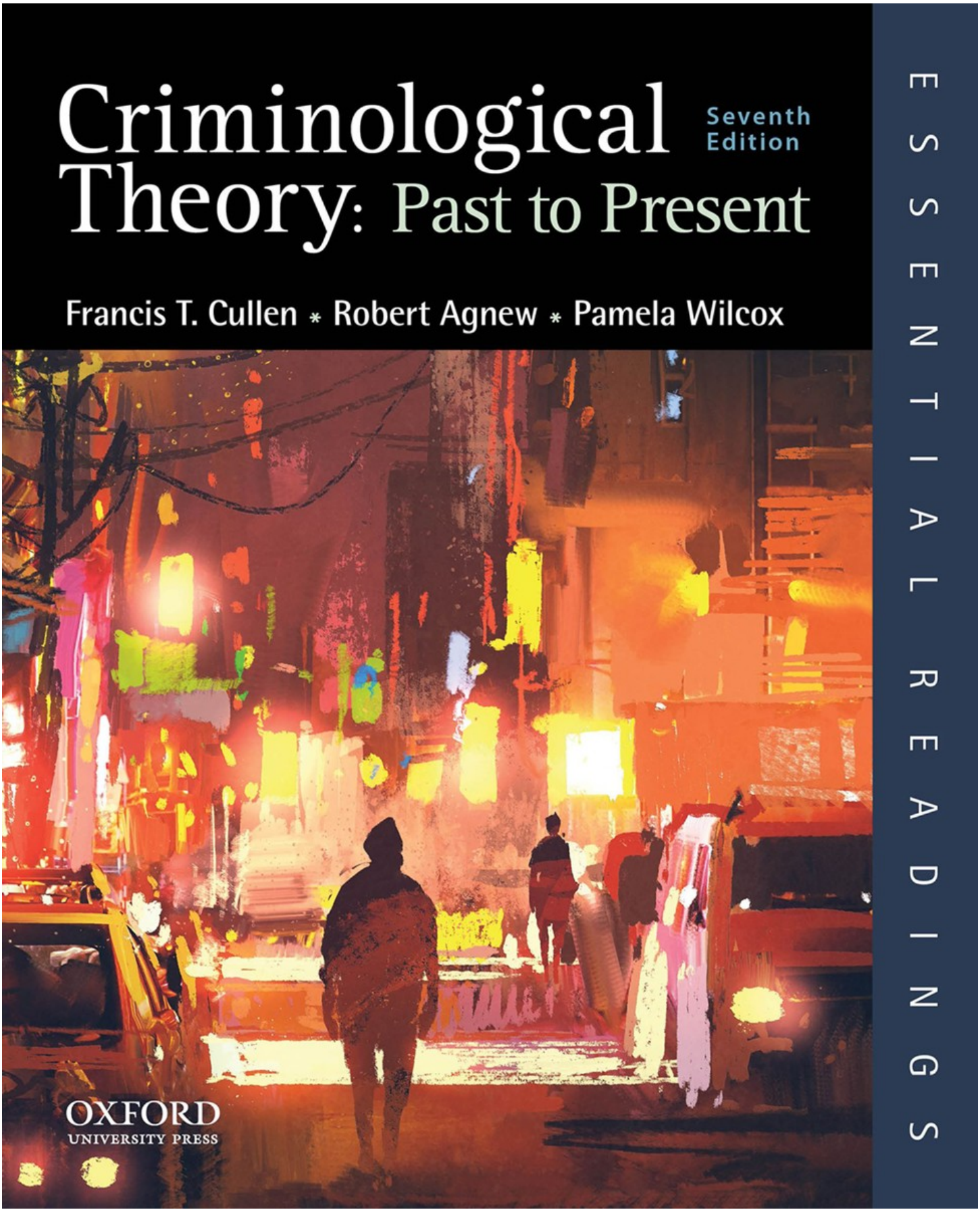
Criminological Theory: Past to Present

Seventh Edition

Francis T. Cullen * Robert Agnew * Pamela Wilcox

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

ESSENTIAL READINGS



This image shows the cover of Criminological Theory: Past to Present: Essential Readings

Criminological Theory: Past to Present

Essential Readings

Seventh Edition

Francis T. Cullen
University of Cincinnati

Robert Agnew
Emory University

Pamela Wilcox
Pennsylvania State University

New York Oxford
Oxford University Press

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford. It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press in the UK and certain other countries.

Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America.

Copyright © 2022, 2018, 2014, 2011, 2007 by Oxford University Press.

For titles covered by Section 112 of the US Higher Education Opportunity Act, please visit www.oup.com/us/he for the latest information about pricing and alternate formats.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press, or as expressly permitted by law, by license, or under terms agreed with the appropriate reproduction rights organization. Inquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department, Oxford University Press, at the address above.

You must not circulate this work in any other form and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer.

CIP data is on file with the Library of Congress

ISBN: 9780197619315 (print)

ISBN: 9780197619339 (epub)

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
Printed by LSC Communications, Inc.
Printed in the United States of America

Created on: 09 November 2021 at 9:44 a.m.

Dedication

Francis T. Cullen
University of Cincinnati

Robert Agnew
Emory University

Pamela Wilcox
Pennsylvania State University

For their continuing love and presence, which gives meaning to our lives, we dedicate this book to our families—to Paula Dubeck and Jordan Cullen, to Mary, Willie, and Jenny Agnew, and to Michael Rosenberg.

About the Editors

Francis T. Cullen
University of Cincinnati

Robert Agnew
Emory University

Pamela Wilcox
Pennsylvania State University

Francis T. Cullen is Distinguished Research Professor Emeritus and Senior Research Associate in the School of Criminal Justice at the University of Cincinnati. He received his Ph.D. (1979) in sociology and education from Columbia University. Professor Cullen has published over 400 works in the areas of criminological theory, corrections, white-collar crime, public opinion, the measurement of sexual victimization, the organization of criminological knowledge, and the criminology of Donald Trump. His books include *Rethinking Crime and Deviance Theory: The Emergence of a Structuring Tradition; Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory; The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory; Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory; Challenging Criminological Theory: The Legacy of Ruth Rosner Kornhauser; Delinquency and Drift: The Criminology of David Matza and Beyond; Communities and Crime: An Enduring American Challenge*; and *Criminological Theory: Context and Consequences*. From 2010 to 2014, Professor Cullen served on the Office of Justice Programs Science Advisory Board for the U.S. Department of Justice. He is a Past President of the American Society of Criminology (ASC) and of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS), and he has received ASC's Edwin H. Sutherland Award and ACJS's Bruce Smith Award. In 2013, he was honored by his alma mater, Bridgewater State University, with a Doctorate in Public Service.

Robert Agnew is Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Sociology, Emeritus, in the Department of Sociology at Emory University. He received his Ph.D. in sociology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1980. He is noted for his development of "general strain theory," a perspective that has attracted considerable theoretical and empirical attention. His publications include *Pressured Into Crime: An Overview of General Strain Theory; Toward a Unified Criminology: Integrating Assumptions about Crime, People, and Society; Why Do Criminals Offend? A General Theory of Crime and Delinquency; and Juvenile Delinquency: Causes and Control* (now in its sixth edition). He is a Past President of the ASC, a Fellow of the ASC, and a recipient of the ASC's Edwin H. Sutherland Award.

Pamela Wilcox is Professor in the Department of Sociology and Criminology at Pennsylvania State University. She received her Ph.D. (1994) in sociology from Duke University. She has published numerous works aimed at developing and testing theories of crime, victimization, and crime prevention. She has also been co-investigator on several federally funded grants aimed at collecting longitudinal and contextual data on such things as school-based offending and victimization, student fear of crime and perceptions of safety, and place-related violence. Her publications include *Communities and Crime: An Enduring American Challenge; Criminal Circumstance: A Dynamic, Multicontextual Criminal Opportunity Theory; The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory; Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*; and *Challenging Criminological Theory: The Legacy of Ruth Rosner*

Kornhauser. Professor Wilcox serves as Deputy/Associate Editor of *Justice Quarterly,* and the *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*. She is a past-Vice President of the ASC, and she is a Fellow of the ASC.

Acknowledgments

Criminological Theory was initially conceptualized over two decades ago when two of us—Frank Cullen and Bob Agnew—set out to create a book that would present the best that theoretical criminology has to offer in a way that remained accessible to students. Since that time, we have enjoyed a collaboration that has seen our theoretical knowledge and friendship grow. Starting with the Fifth Edition, we expanded our authorship team to include Pam Wilcox. With each edition—now the Seventh—we have endeavored to fashion a volume that retains the wisdom of the past and the excitement found in the fresh criminological contributions of the present.

As with any book project, *Criminological Theory* consumed much time and effort. To be sure, it was a labor of love. Thinking about theory—and, in particular, trying to design the best set of readings available—is fun. Still, with busy lives, finding the space in one's day to carefully research and write is a source of some strain. We are fortunate, however, that during these times, we have had an amazing amount of social support that has made authoring the Seventh Edition not only possible but also a rewarding experience.

Our most constant source of support has been from our families. Their love, patience, and good humor have sustained us in so many ways across the years. We dedicate this book to them: to Paula Dubeck and Jordan Cullen (Frank Cullen); to Mary, Willie, and Jenny Agnew (Bob Agnew); and to Michael Rosenberg (Pam Wilcox).

Criminological Theory would never have come to fruition if it were not for Julie Teweles, who as owner and chief editor of Roxbury Press in the late 1990s embraced our vision to publish a comprehensive book on criminological theory. But the world of publishing is dynamic, not stable, and our volume moved with the Fourth Edition to Oxford University Press. The partnership has been fruitful and, most importantly, has allowed us to publish a work that has improved with each edition. We are especially fortunate to have a remarkable editor, Steve Helba, who listens to our laments, tolerates our idiosyncrasies, and keeps us on track to meet deadlines. Sonya Venugopal at Oxford University Press and Ann Borman at Straive must be thanked as well for their assistance in bringing this book to press.

We also wish to take advantage of this opportunity to highlight our appreciation for the continuing support we have received from our academic homes, the School of Criminal Justice at the University of Cincinnati, the Department of Sociology at Emory University, and the Department of Sociology and Criminology at Pennsylvania State University. We will refrain from naming the numerous colleagues and students who have helped us in diverse ways as we authored the present and past editions, but we will pause to give them a collective expression of our gratitude.

In revising each edition of *Criminological Theory*, we rely not only on our own analysis of changes in the criminological imagination but also on reviews from scholars who, in quite detailed ways, identify essential readings for us to consider. We study these reviews carefully and, where a consensus in recommendations emerges, often follow this collective advice. For the Seventh Edition, we thus are pleased to be able to thank the following scholars for their thoughtful reviews and helpful guidance:

- Joe McKenna, Texas State University
- Lallen T. Johnson, American University
- Erin Marie Kearns, University of Nebraska at Omaha
- David C. Pyrooz, University of Colorado Boulder
- Sandra S. Stone, University of South Florida

- Naomi F. Sugie, University of California, Irvine
- Michael F. TenEyck, University of Texas at Arlington
- Brooke M. Wagner, Wittenberg University
- Guiseppe Fazari, Seton Hall University
- Robert Garot, John Jay College
- Suman Kakar, Florida International University

Finally, we are most pleased to express our heartfelt gratitude to our fellow criminologists—now hopefully reading this page—who have honored us by using *Criminological Theory* in your research and in your courses. Editing a book is a daunting challenge that demands wisdom in the selection of readings and care in writing informative introductory sections. These efforts, however, only become meaningful if the resulting book merits acceptance by one's scholarly peers. So, again, your continued support is much appreciated. We hope that the current edition of *Criminological Theory* again lives up to your expectations and can inspire in your students the fascination for the criminological enterprise that we all share.

Changes Made in the Seventh Edition

Francis T. Cullen
University of Cincinnati

Robert Agnew
Emory University

Pamela Wilcox
Pennsylvania State University

As with past editions, the Seventh Edition of *Criminological Theory: Past to Present—Essential Readings* was carefully revised. It is difficult to prune some readings that continue to have value. But every book faces space limitations and our commitment is to include the most essential theoretical contributions. Indeed, criminology is a dynamic field, and our obligation as authors is to develop new sections that capture these developments.

Beyond general editing and updating of our introductory sections, below we detail the main changes made to the previous edition. We trust that these additions and alterations make the Seventh Edition of *Criminological Theory* up to date and able to provide students with a valuable learning experience.

- A new reading and accompanying introduction added to *Part II—The Chicago School: The City, Social Disorganization, and Crime*. This new selection is a classic piece that addresses the systemic model of community crime control.
- A new reading, with an accompanying introduction, added as the first entry to *Part VI—Labeling Theory: Societal Reaction and the Creation of Criminals* with the intent of introducing students to a classic theoretical statement on criminal labeling.
- A new reading and accompanying introduction added to *Part VII—Critical Criminology: Power, Peace, and Crime*. This new selection addresses state-corporate crime.
- A new reading and accompanying introduction added to *Part IX—How Black Lives Matter: Theoretical Developments*. This new selection addresses a contemporary form of institutional racism referred to as "The New Jim Crow."
- A new reading and accompanying introduction added to *Part X—Reviving Classical Theory: Deterrence and Rational Choice Theories*. This new selection addresses procedural justice theory as a foil to classical deterrence theory.
- A new reading and accompanying introduction added to *Part XI—Environmental Criminology: Situational Opportunity Theories*. The selection provides a contemporary perspective outlining how effective place management can reduce crime opportunity at specific locations.
- A new reading and accompanying introduction added to *Part XII—Growing Up Criminal: Trait and Biosocial Theories*. This is a contemporary piece that offers fresh insights regarding biological explanations of criminal behavior, with a focus on levels of arousal, the brain, and genetics.

- Two new readings, with accompanying introductions, added to *Part XIV—Pulling It All Together: Integrated Theories of Crime*. One new selection describes a seminal integrative social developmental model of criminal behavior. The second new essay addresses a contemporary integrative theory of climate change and crime.

Instructor's Guide

This edition of *Criminological Theory* makes available a comprehensive instructor's manual and test bank. To facilitate student learning, the guide includes learning objectives, key words, and discussion topics and exercises. The guide makes available a test bank with multiple choice and essay questions. Further, to assist in the presentation of lectures, a comprehensive PowerPoint document has been developed. The guide has been authored by Cheryl Lero Jonson from Xavier University. Note that the guide is available online via the Ancillary Resource Center: https://learninglink.oup.com/access/cullen-7e.

Contents

Introduction Understanding *Criminological Theory*: A Guide for Readers

Francis T. Cullen

Robert Agnew

Pamela Wilcox

Section 1 THE RISE AND GROWTH OF AMERICAN CRIMINOLOGY

Part I The Origins of Modern Criminology

1. An Essay on Crimes and Punishments

Cesare Beccaria

2. The Criminal Man

Cesare Lombroso

Part II The Chicago School: The City, Social Disorganization, and Crime

3. Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas

Clifford R. Shaw

Henry D. McKay

4. Systemic Control and Crime

Robert J. Bursik Jr.

Harold G. Grasmick

5. Collective Efficacy and Crime

Robert J. Sampson

Stephen W. Raudenbush

Felton Earls

6. Legal Cynicism and Crime

David S. Kirk

Andrew V. Papachristos

Part III Learning to Be a Criminal: Differential Association, Subcultural, and Social Learning Theories

7. A Theory of Differential Association

Edwin H. Sutherland

Donald R. Cressey

8. White-Collar Criminality

Edwin H. Sutherland

9. A Social Learning Theory of Crime

Ronald L. Akers

10. The Code of the Street

Elijah Anderson

Part IV Anomie/Strain Theories of Crime

11. Social Structure and Anomie

Robert K. Merton

12. Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang

Albert K. Cohen

13. Crime and the American Dream

Richard Rosenfeld

Steven F. Messner

14. Pressured Into Crime: General Strain Theory

Robert Agnew

Part V Varieties of Control Theory

15. Techniques of Neutralization

Gresham M. Sykes

David Matza

16. Social Bond Theory

Travis Hirschi

17. A General Theory of Crime

Michael R. Gottfredson

Travis Hirschi

SECTION 2 RETHINKING CRIMINOLOGY

Part VI Labeling Theory: Societal Reaction and the Creation of Criminals

18. The Saints and the Roughnecks

William J. Chambliss

19. Crime, Shame, and Reintegration

John Braithwaite

20. Making Good

Shadd Maruna

Part VII Critical Criminology: Power, Peace, and Crime

21. Criminality and Economic Conditions

Willem Bonger

22. Crime in a Market Society

Elliott Currie

23. The Concept and Theory of State-Corporate Crime

Ronald C. Kramer

Raymond J. Michalowski

David Kauzlarich

Part VIII Feminist Theories: Gender, Power, and Crime

24. Sisters in Crime

Freda Adler

25. A Feminist Theory of Female Delinquency

Meda Chesney-Lind

26. Masculinities and Crime

James W. Messerschmidt

27. Getting Played

Jody Miller

Part IX How Black Lives Matter: Theoretical Developments

28. A Theory of Race, Crime, and Urban Inequality

Robert J. Sampson

William Julius Wilson

29. Imprisoning Communities: Coerced Mobility Theory

Todd R. Clear

30. The New Jim Crow

Michelle Alexander

31. A Theory of African American Offending

James D. Unnever

Shaun L. Gabbidon

SECTION 3 CHOICE, OPPORTUNITY, AND CRIME

Part X Reviving Classical Theory: Deterrence and Rational Choice Theories

32. Reconceptualizing Deterrence Theory

Mark C. Stafford

Mark Warr

33. Crime as a Rational Choice

Derek B. Cornish

Ronald V. Clarke

34. Broken Windows

James Q. Wilson

George L. Kelling

35. Procedural Justice Theory

Tom R. Tyler

Part XI Environmental Criminology: Situational Opportunity Theories

36. Routine Activity Theory

Lawrence E. Cohen

Marcus Felson

37. The Theory of Target Search

Paul J. Brantingham

Patricia L. Brantingham

38. Place Management Theory

Tamara D. Madensen

John E. Eck

39. Multilevel Criminal Opportunity

Pamela Wilcox

Brooke Miller Gialopsos

Kenneth C. Land

SECTION 4 DEVELOPMENT AND CRIME ACROSS THE LIFE COURSE

Part XII Growing Up Criminal: Trait and Biosocial Theories

40. Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency

Sheldon Glueck

Eleanor Glueck

41. Biological Explanations of Criminal Behavior

Shichun Ling

Rebecca Umbach

Adrian Raine

42. Personality and Crime: Are Some People Crime Prone?

Avshalom Caspi

Terrie E. Moffitt

Phil A. Silva

Magda Stouthamer-Loeber

Robert F. Krueger

Pamela S. Schmutte

Part XIII Getting Into and Out of Crime: Life-Course Theories

43. Pathways in the Life Course to Crime

Terrie E. Moffitt

44. A Theory of Persistent Offending and Desistance from Crime

John H. Laub

Robert J. Sampson

45. The Feared Self: An Identity Theory of Desistance

Raymond Paternoster

Shawn Bushway

SECTION 5 CONTEMPORARY CRIMINOLOGY

Part XIV Pulling It All Together: Integrated Theories of Crime

46. Social Development Model

Christopher Cambron

Richard F. Catalano

J. David Hawkins

47. Situational Action Theory

Per-Olof H. Wikström

48. Climate Change and Crime

Robert Agnew

Part XV Positive Criminology

49. Social Support and Crime

Francis T. Cullen

50. Social Concern and Crime

Robert Agnew

INTRODUCTION
Understanding *Criminological Theory:* A Guide for Readers

Francis T. Cullen
University of Cincinnati

Robert Agnew
Emory University

Pamela Wilcox
Pennsylvania State University

Criminology is a field rich in theoretical imagination. To an extent, this diversity of theorizing reflects the discipline's immaturity—its inability as of yet to develop a single paradigm that is so empirically superior to its competitors that it earns the allegiance of most scholars. In biology, for example, Charles Darwin's theory of evolution provides the organizing framework that virtually all serious scientists embrace. Economists as a field share the assumption that human behavior is self-interested and based on rational choice—the pursuit of benefits over costs. Both biologists and economists disagree among themselves a great deal and develop different ideas about how the world operates, but they tend to do so within the parameters of an overriding paradigm.

Criminology, however, is structured in a different way. There are many theories or "schools of thought." Again, the fact that criminologists do not agree on "why crime occurs" can be seen as a limitation of the field. But the richness in thinking within criminology also is a manifestation of the complexity of its subject matter. Like much social behavior, crime is multifaceted and potentially shaped by a range of factors that operate inside and outside individuals, that exist on the macro level and the micro level, and that have effects across various points in the life cycle. Illuminating what causes crime is thus a daunting task that benefits from efforts to view its origins from many angles and through different colored lenses.

The purpose of this volume is to capture the diversity of thinking on crime causation that now prevails within criminology. As we surveyed the large and growing body of theoretical criminology, it became apparent that a surplus of worthy contributions was available; this reader could easily have doubled in size. The practicalities of editing a single volume of manageable length and appropriate for classroom use, however, required that we make tough choices as to what to include and what, regrettably, to omit. In doing so, we attempted to select the most *essential readings*—that is, works that have had or are now having the largest impact on criminological theory and research. These writings either were instrumental in creating a theoretical tradition or subsequently extended an existing perspective in noteworthy ways.

However, using and learning from a book of readings—a "reader"—can be challenging. There is a certain comfort in a traditional textbook in which the authors summarize the knowledge in a clear and convenient way. In contrast, edited readers require that you return to the original writings. These writings were authored at different times, for different audiences, and, of course, in different voices. There is much value in revisiting the originals—of not relying exclusively on someone else's retelling of the theory. But it is also not always easy to keep all the ideas straight and to understand fully what is being said.

In this collection, however, we take steps to guide readers along their excursion through criminological theory. This introductory essay is our first effort to tell readers how to use this book and what the Seventh Edition of *Criminological Theory: Past to Present* "is all about." We invite you, therefore, to take a few moments to consider the rest of this "guide." We trust that the investment will make our collection of essays more accessible, understandable, and rewarding.

How to Use This Book

The Seventh Edition of *Criminological Theory* is like two books in one. Most important, the book presents 50 selections from scholars who have sought to explain the origins of criminal behavior. These are arranged from Chapter 1 to Chapter 50. Taken together, these writings provide remarkable insights into why people break the law.

The "second book" is composed of the introductory material that we, as editors, have written and inserted throughout the book. *Criminological Theory* is divided into 15 parts. These are labeled Part I to Part XV. Each "part" represents a distinct theoretical approach to the explanation of crime. To guide readers on their adventure across time (from past to present) and across theories, each of the volume's parts is preceded by a general introduction that places its readings in their scholarly context. For a given part, the introduction conveys the central thrust of a perspective; that is, it addresses what makes the theory unique or different from other explanations of crime. It also attempts to show how specific readings "fit into" the theoretical paradigm covered in that part of the book. In many ways, these introductions—when taken together—are much like a separate textbook on theories of crime. Again, each introduction is tied to a distinct part and to the selections therein. But they could virtually be read by themselves as a fairly comprehensive summary of criminological theory.

Beyond the overviews leading into the book's 15 parts, we have also written separate introductions for each of the 50 selections (which are arranged as "chapters" in this volume). These article introductions should make the excerpts more understandable by pointing out the key issues that readers should attend to as they study each selection.

We also divide the book one further way, grouping chapters into Sections 1 to 5. Chapters are placed together into a section based on some commonality, such as a similar time of origin, longstanding rivalry or integration, and shared theoretical or political assumptions. Later in this Introduction, we will return to these five sections and show how they help to organize the book and help you to understand the development of criminological theory.

Given the way we have organized the book, we suspect that the most effective way to understand each theoretical selection is to proceed in four steps:

First, read the introduction to the part in which the selection appears. Again, this material will provide an overview of (1) the principles of the general school of criminological thought examined in the part and (2) the specific selections in that school included in the volume.

Second, before reading a given individual selection, be sure to read the introduction written specifically for that chapter. After doing so, you should have a reasonably solid understanding of both the general theoretical framework and the specific content of the selection you are about to read.

Third, now turn your attention to the original work authored by the criminological theorist(s) in question. Ideally, you will have the foundation to comprehend not only the content of the theory—what the theory is saying—but also how it "fits" in with the school of thought in that part of the book.

Fourth, if you become confused in any way, you might then revisit either the part or the chapter introduction where we have reviewed the materials. As will be explained, we also provide a table here that summarizes the main schools of thought. This chart might also be employed to refresh your thinking.

In short, we have attempted to provide an integrated learning experience. Traditional textbooks are useful, but again, they deprive readers of the opportunities to hear theorists in their own voices. Books of edited readings supply the original works, but many include only cursory introductions, which leave readers to their own devices to "figure out" what the theories mean and how all the information "fits together." Our goal, by contrast, is to furnish both the originals and the kind of detailed but clear commentary that will make reading these primary materials an enriching rather than a mystifying experience. For this reason, we urge readers to take advantage of the introductory essays and to use them to make the primary materials in the individual chapters more accessible and meaningful.

Finally, at the close of each reading, we list several "Discussion Questions." These queries are designed to test your knowledge of the theories, to encourage you to critically evaluate the theories, and to guide class discussions on the theories.

Central Theme: Past to Present

Criminological Theory is not just an endless roster of one reading after another. Already, we have explained that the book is divided into 15 major parts, with each area representing a major theoretical perspective or "school of criminology." In making the selections of which readings to place into each of these 15 parts, we focused—as we have said—on theoretical writings that were essential or "must reads" for anyone wishing to be literate in criminology.

However, our book is organized around another theme that also is represented in its subtitle: *Past to Present*. Within each part, we thus start with one or more "classic" works that were responsible for, in essence, finding or establishing the school of thought. Then, we include one or more selections from more contemporary criminologists. In this way, readers see how the theoretical perspective covered in the part has evolved from "past to present." This approach makes sense to us because, as we have seen in our joint careers, criminological theory is dynamic, not static.

Studying the past—the classic works—is important for two reasons. First, collectively, they help us to learn about the history of the discipline and to learn in detail how scholars first set forth distinct, competing ways of viewing crime causation. Second, the writings of today's scholars typically are not created anew; they come from someplace. Understanding why a theorist makes certain claims today is difficult without some insight into where his or her ideas first originated. In short, the past provides the context for understanding the present.

But classic works, although due their respect, should not be enshrined as having conveyed sacred truths that are beyond criticism and revision. Knowledge grows, and as this process unfolds, new ideas develop that extend earlier statements of a theory. As Robert K. Merton observed, however farsighted the "giants" in the field have been, those who stand "on the shoulders of giants" can see even farther. Contemporary theories thus represent our latest insights into the causes of crime. They also have the largest influence in directing the empirical research of today's scholars. As a result, *Criminological Theory* includes a good deal of material on contemporary explanations of crime.

Briefly, in arranging this book, our goal was to select works that not only were essential readings but also revealed the development of criminological theory from past to present. In approaching each part, the reader should be aware that selections are arranged with the classic works first and the more contemporary works second. Although the writings within each part can be read in different orders, they are placed in a sequence that we believe best shows the development of ideas within the school of thought represented in the part.

We emphasize this structure of the book—repeated within each individual part—so that readers will not simply read one selection after another without thinking about how each of these chapters are *interconnected*. These theoretical interconnections, moreover, are discussed in the introductions to each part. In this way, readers will be alerted as to

how early writings laid a school's theoretical foundation and then how, specifically, later works built upon these classic statements.

The excitement, then, is not simply in knowing what each school of criminology—or each contribution within each school—has said. Admittedly, learning the content of the theoretical works is part of the job, so to speak. But for those of us who make criminological theory not only our livelihood but also our passion, the challenge and fascination come from figuring out *how ideas about crime develop*. As this puzzle is completed one step at a time—that is, as readers master one school of thought after another—it is as though a giant mosaic is being revealed before one's eyes. It is a wonderful experience that the arrangement of our book hopefully makes possible.

Keeping Theories Straight

As authors, our challenge is how to take the many important writings on crime and to whittle them down to the 50 most noteworthy contributions. But to readers, such a lengthy roster of writings might well produce an opposite reaction: "How am I supposed to keep all these readings straight?"

We have given part of the answer already. Thus, we have alerted you that the readings in this book are not simply a continuous list of 50 separate chapters that should be seen as distinct entities. Rather, criminological theory is *organized into schools of thought*, and our book reflects this theoretical landscape. Accordingly, the first "cognitive framework" to employ is to ask yourself what school or general theory a reading "falls into." Once this fact is known, you are likely to have a good sense or clue as to what the reading is about. Furthermore, the book is arranged by a second "cognitive framework": the readings *within each school* are organized from "past to present"—from original or foundational statements of the theory to more contemporary statements. As a result, readings can be "placed" as being earlier or later in a theory's development.

This ability to *locate* each reading (1) into a general criminological school and then (2) into a particular's school's development is one strategy for "keeping theories straight." As any given work is reviewed, it might be helpful to envision where in the "scheme of things" this reading "fits." For example, when reading about Travis Hirschi's "social bond theory," one would make a "mental note" that this work is in the part on "control theory." This categorization means that Hirschi is going to link crime to some sort of absence or breakdown of control. Now, given the date of publication of Hirschi's work (1969), you would also know that it is a fairly early control theory. This fact makes it likely that later theories would, at least in part, build upon the social bond perspective. With this information "in mind," Hirschi's theory is not an isolated reading but exists within an intellectual context. Making these linkages increases the chance that the details of his theory will be more easily recalled.

Another strategy that you might use to keep theories straight is to think about the *names of the theories*. Criminologists do not select names for their theories randomly. Instead, they take a great deal of time to pick out terms that capture the essence of their theory. Not all titles of theories or of the works listed in this book contain explanatory terms, but many do. For example, Hirschi's work is called "Social Bond Theory." Immediately, as a reader, you should have a good idea what his central thesis is: If people have social bonds, they will not go into crime; if social bonds are weak, they will go into crime. Or, take Sutherland's "A Theory of Differential Association." Any idea of what these theorists propose is the key cause of crime? If you answered "differential association" with criminal definitions, then you already know their central premise. What about "strain theory"? Right! People under strain are more likely to become criminal. Of course, theories are much more complicated than this, and it is important (and fun!) to learn their nuances. But knowing the names of theories is an effective device to sensitize yourself to recalling the theory's main message; it is then but a small step to fill in the details on the theory in question.

Another way of keeping theories straight is to understand that each theory "says something new and/or different about crime." For a theory to make its mark on criminology—and to be included in a book like this on "essential readings"—it must make a point that other writings have not made previously. Again, theories tend to build upon one another and thus typically are not completely novel. Still, each theory tries to carve out its own special niche—to make the case that previous works either were mistaken, omitted a key cause of crime, and/or can be interpreted in a new way. Thus, when trying to remember a reading, it might be helpful to ask: What is this author saying that makes his or her work different?

For example, James Messerschmidt argues that men commit crime as a way of showing that they are "masculine"—as a way of "doing gender." Two features, then, are unique about his work. First, like other feminist writers, he says that theories that do not take gender into account have omitted a key factor of social life and thus are bound to be incomplete, if not wrong. Second, he says that feminist writers who focused on *female* crime did not pay attention to what it means to be *male*. Yet, if males commit a disproportionate share of crime, it is logical to assume that something about *being a man* might be involved in causing crime. In this context, understanding Messerschmidt's work—"keeping it straight"—is easier if the reader thinks about what makes his work different: his focus on what it means to be male or on "masculinities." Of course, this task is made easier by reading the introductions we have written to his article and to the part of the book in which his selection appears.

Finally, to aid in readers having a sense of where theories fit, we have developed Table 1, which is a brief *reader's guide* to criminological theory. This table lists the general theories of crime, which part of the book each theory appears in, each theory's main authors, and each theory's central thesis. We must caution that this chart does not take the place of actually reading the introductions and selections. It is *not* the *Classic Comics of Criminology*! In fact, the table will make the least sense to those who have done the least amount of reading. However, for those who have studied the book in detail, this table can serve as a handy guide to remind you of how the various theories, theorists, and themes fit together.

TABLE 1 A Brief Reader's Guide to Criminological Theory

Theory of Crime	Part of Book	Main Theorists in This Book	Central Thesis of the Theory
Classical	I	Beccaria	Crime occurs when the benefits outweigh the costs—when people pursue self-interest in the absence of effective punishments. Crime is a free-willed choice.
Positivist	I	Lombroso	Crime is caused or determined. Lombroso placed more emphasis on biological deficiencies, whereas later scholars would emphasize psychological and sociological factors (among others).
Social Disorganization/Chicago School	II	Shaw and McKay Bursik and Grasmick Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls Kirk and Papachristos	Disorganized communities cause crime because informal social controls break down, a criminal culture emerges, and conventional culture is attenuated. They lack the "collective efficacy" to fight crime and disorder.

Theory of Crime	Part of Book	Main Theorists in This Book	Central Thesis of the Theory
Differential Association/Social Learning	III	Sutherland and Cressey Akers Anderson	Crime, whether street crime or white-collar crime, is learned through associations with criminal definitions. Interacting with antisocial peers is a major cause of crime. Criminal behavior will be repeated and become chronic if reinforced. When criminal subcultures exist, many individuals can learn to commit crime in one location, and crime rates—including violence—may become very high.
Anomie/Institutional Anomie	IV	Merton Rosenfeld and Messner	The gap between the American Dream's goal of economic success and the opportunity to obtain this goal creates structural strain. Norms weaken, and "anomie" ensues, thus creating high crime rates. When other social institutions (such as the family) are weak to begin with or are also weakened by the American Dream, the economic institution is dominant. When such an institutional imbalance exists—as in the United States—then crime rates are very high.
Strain/General Strain	IV	Cohen Agnew	When individuals cannot obtain success goals (e.g., money, status in school), they experience strain or pressure. Under certain conditions, they are likely to respond to this strain through crime. The strains leading to crime, however, may be linked not only to goal blockage (or deprivation of valued stimuli) but also to the presentation of noxious stimuli and the taking away of valued stimuli.(continued)
Control	V	Sykes and Matza Hirschi Gottfredson	Start by asking the question, "Why don't people commit crime?" It is assumed that criminal motivation is widespread. The key factor in crime causation is thus the presence or absence of control. This control or containment might be rooted in relationships (e.g., social bonds) or be internal (e.g., self-control). Further, when normative controls exist, crime might still be possible through the use of "techniques of neutralization" that justify breaking the law under specific circumstances.
Labeling/Shaming	VI	Chambliss Braithwaite Maruna	People become stabilized in criminal roles when they are labeled as criminals, are stigmatized, develop criminal identities, are sent to prison, and are excluded from conventional roles. Reintegrative responses are less likely to create defiance and a commitment to crime. Similarly, an identity based on a redemption script fosters offender desistance.
Critical	VII	Bonger Currie Kramer, Michalowski, and Kauzlarich	Inequality in power and material well-being creates conditions that lead to street crime and corporate crime. Capitalism and its market economy are especially criminogenic because they create vast inequality that impoverishes many. State-corporate crime occurs when these two powerful actors collude to break the law.
Feminist	VIII	Adler Chesney-Lind Messerschmidt Miller	Crime cannot be understood without considering gender. Crime is shaped by the different social experiences of and power exercised by men and women. Patriarchy is a broad structure that shapes gender-related experiences and power. Men may use crime to exert control over women and to demonstrate their masculinity—that is, to show that they are "men" in a way consistent with societal ideals of masculinity. Race and class can intersect with gender to influence crime and victimization experiences. (continued)
Black Criminology	IX	Sampson and Wilson Clear Alexander	Due to unique structural conditions (e.g., concentrated disadvantage, living in isolated and segregated neighborhoods) and to cultural beliefs rooted in those conditions, African American men and women are at risk for high rates of violent crime and victimization. Among some blacks, racial discrimination might also be an added criminogenic risk factor not experienced by whites. Mass incarceration can further disorganize inner-city communities, resulting in higher crime rates. Racial disparities in the justice system lead as well to collateral consequences that deny blacks employment,

Theory of Crime	Part of Book	Main Theorists in This Book	Central Thesis of the Theory
		Unnever and Gabbidon	welfare, and the franchise. This seemingly legal and colorblind exclusion can be stigmatizing and thus criminogenic. It is the "New Jim Crow."
Deterrence/Rational Choice	X	Stafford and Warr Cornish and Clarke Wilson and Kelling Tyler	Building on classical theory, crime is seen as a choice that is influenced by its costs and benefits—that is, by its "rationality." Crime will be more likely to be deterred if its costs are raised (e.g., more effort required, more punishment applied), especially if the costs are certain and immediate. Police can prevent crime by acting proactively to fix "broken windows" (halt incivilities) that attract criminals to an area and by acting with "procedural justice" in officer-citizen interactions.
Environmental/Routine Activity	XI	Cohen and Felson Brantingham and Brantingham Madensen (Herold) and Eck Wilcox, Gialopsos, and Land	Crime occurs when there is an intersection in time and space of a motivated offender, an attractive target, and a lack of capable guardianship. People's daily, routine activities affect the likelihood they will be an attractive target or will encounter an offender in a situation where no effective guardianship is present. Changes in routine activities in society (e.g., women working) can affect crime rates. The best way to lower crime is through situational crime prevention in which the focus is not on changing offenders but on reducing the opportunity to commit a crime in a given place (e.g., create "defensible space," add a "guardian"). Place managers play a key role in civilian guardianship and in preventing a location from becoming a crime hot spot.
Trait/Biosocial	XII	Glueck and Glueck Ling, Umbach, and Raine Caspi, Moffitt, et al.	Criminals differ from noncriminals on a number of biological and psychological traits that often are manifested early in life and ensnare youngsters in a development pathway into crime. These traits cause crime either directly by affecting choices people make or indirectly (i.e., in interaction with the social environment).(continued)
Developmental/Life-Course	XIII	Moffitt Laub and Sampson Paternoster and Bushway	Crime causation is a developmental process that starts before birth and continues throughout the life course. Individual factors interact with social factors to determine the onset, length, and end of criminal careers. The key theoretical issues involve continuity and change in crime. Some theories predict continuity across the life course; others predict continuity for some offenders, and change for other offenders; and some predict continuity and change for the same offenders. Desistance from crime is due to opportunities for change and to offenders experiencing a cognitive transformation.
Integrated	XIV	Cambron, Catalano, and Hawkins Wikström Agnew	These theories use components from other theories—usually strain, control, and social learning—to create a new theory that explains crime. They often are life-course theories, arguing that causes of crime occur in a sequence across time. Notably, events such as climate change can exacerbate diverse risk factors and make crime more likely.
Positive	XV	Cullen	Crime is unlikely when people have positive traits (e.g., empathy) and social experiences (e.g., parental love). In particular, social support and social

Theory of Crime	Part of Book	Main Theorists in This Book	Central Thesis of the Theory
		Agnew	concern can foster healthy development and help individuals to cope with potentially criminogenic negative events and relationships.

How Criminological Theory Developed

As with other scholarly fields, criminology as a discipline has its unique history. The most important ideas about crime have not occurred all at once but rather have developed at particular points in time. We have already alluded to this time dimension when we noted that the readings in each part of the book are arranged from "past to present." But beyond the development of ideas *within each theoretical perspective* (e.g., control theory), there is also the issue of when different schools of thought first came on the scene and/or became major influences within criminology (e.g., social disorganization theory before labeling theory). This development of criminological schools is not easy to diagram because perspectives have waxed and waned in popularity, and many have overlapped for many years despite beginning at different times. That is, the world of ideas does not always arrange itself in a nice, neat package. Still, it is important to know that the 15 parts in the Seventh Edition of *Criminological Theory* are generally arranged in a sequential order, with earlier schools of thought presented first and more recently developed perspectives placed later in the book. We thus pause briefly to review how criminological theory has developed and how this development is reflected in the structure of our book.

In a way, then, our goal is to try to *tell you a story* about the evolution of scholars' thinking about crime. As noted earlier, we have tried to capture this development of criminological theory by grouping the 15 parts into five sections. To borrow John Laub's term, each section is devoted to a major "turning point" in theoretical criminology—a juncture when a different way of seeing crime emerged and reoriented the direction of the field. Again, many existing theories did not vanish. But during these turning points, existing paradigms were fundamentally challenged and criminology was fundamentally transformed.

Below, we review these five sections of the book and, in so doing, attempt to provide a brief historical account of the criminological enterprise.

Section 1. The Rise and Growth of American Criminology

Two foundational perspectives. *Criminological Theory* begins in Part I with two general perspectives—the classical and positivist schools—that laid the foundation for the field of criminology. The "classical school" was rooted in an attempt during the Enlightenment to reform criminal laws that were unfair and cruel. Based on the noble vision that all humans were endowed with free will and equal rights, it suggested that crime was a rational choice based on the pleasures of an illegal act outweighing its pains. The criminal law could deter crime if it was certain and just harsh enough that the choice of crime would not "pay." The focus thus was not on the offender but on finding ways to finely calibrate the criminal law so that it would make crime an unattractive choice.

In contrast, the "positivist school" rejected these views as wishful philosophy. Instead, Lombroso and those who followed in his footsteps argued that crime, like illness, was *caused*, not chosen, and that the role of criminology was to use science to detect the sources of criminality. Lombroso's theory, which essentially used the principles of Charles Darwin to argue that criminals were not sufficiently "evolved" biologically, would prove controversial and be rejected by later scholars. But Lombroso's paradigm—his basic approach of studying offenders to see what made them different from non-offenders—would become the main strategy of modern criminology. That is, we could not simply assume that all offenders were the same but would have to search for the origins of the criminal "man" (women would not be studied systematically until many years later).

As will be seen later in Part XII, some scholars have followed in the Lombrosian tradition of searching for the criminal "man"—of trying to discover what is peculiar about individuals that makes them criminal. These approaches are said to be searching for *individual differences* or *criminogenic traits*. Some scholars prefer to use the term *heterogeneity*; that is, people's traits—whether eye color, height, weight, or criminal propensity—are not homogeneous but heterogeneous. So, the key to criminology is in asking, What is it about criminals that makes them different? Scholars in the individual trait paradigm typically answer that offenders have biological or psychological deficiencies. Some of the more sophisticated approaches—often called biosocial criminology—argue that individual traits do not lead directly to crime but rather interact with the social environment to create a person-situation nexus that is criminogenic (e.g., a temperamental child is more likely to be spanked and rejected by parents, which in turn makes the child develop conduct problems).

Individual trait theories were popular in early American criminology (in the beginning part of the 1900s) and have reemerged in popularity in the last two decades. This is especially true because of the revolution within genetics and neuroscience that has made tracing biological influences more feasible. For much of the twentieth century, however, scholars rejected such approaches for failing to incorporate *sociological* causes of crime. During this lengthy period, American criminology was largely sociological criminology. The debate among scholars was not over whether crime was a social product, but rather over which set of social factors was the main source of criminal behavior. These ideas tended to fall into three schools of thought—differential association, control, and strain theories—that have earned the status of the "Big Three" in criminological theory.

The Big Three. Notably, two of the Big Three sociological theories can trace their origins to the investigations of Clifford Shaw and Henry D. McKay. Using juvenile court records, Shaw and McKay mapped the distribution of delinquency in pre-1940 Chicago, finding that crime rates were highest in neighborhoods located closest to the center of the city. They rejected the idea that crime in inner-city communities was due to the individual traits of the people who had moved to these areas. (This is sometimes called a "compositional effect.") Instead, they argued that crime was a product of the *characteristics of the community*. (This is sometimes called a "contextual effect.") They thus made a powerful case that crime was a sociological phenomenon—a theme that would dominate American criminology for the rest of the twentieth century.

To be specific, Shaw and McKay set forth a social disorganization perspective that linked crime to the breakdown of informal social control in the neighborhoods. They also argued that as control waned, cultural values supportive of delinquency emerged that were transmitted from one generation to the next (e.g., through gangs). There is a long tradition that, even today, studies how characteristics of communities, rather than of residents, cause crime (see Part II).

Because of the location of their study and the fact that the scholars were linked to the University of Chicago, this perspective became known as the "Chicago school" of criminology. Importantly, beyond their own social disorganization model, Shaw and McKay's approach eventually gave rise to two distinct theories that, ironically, have become vigorous rivals in contemporary criminology. These are "differential association/social learning theory" (Part III) and "control theory" (Part V).

First, Edwin Sutherland borrowed Shaw and McKay's idea that crime would occur if criminal values were transmitted. Later joined by Donald Cressey, Sutherland formalized this insight into his theory of differential association. His key contention was that learning definitions favorable to crime would precipitate illegal conduct. Notably, Sutherland argued that differential association explained involvement not only in street crime but also in what he famously coined as "white-collar crime"—illegalities of high-status people. Other theorists would follow who would document the content of criminal "subcultures" located in disadvantaged areas and show how these pro-criminal and pro-violent beliefs were conducive to wayward behavior. Later, Ronald Akers would formalize these

views still further in his social learning theory that applied modern learning principles to explain the initiation and continuation of criminal behavior (see Part III).

Second, the emphasis of social disorganization theory on the weakening of controls led to the development of a variety of "control theories" (Part V). The general principle of control theory is that crime is more likely when controls are weak but that the lure of crime will be resisted when controls are strong.

Perhaps the most famous control theorist has been Travis Hirschi. Hirschi popularized the notion that the motivation or propensity to commit crime was virtually universal. Humans by nature pursued self-gratification in the easiest and most immediate way possible. The attraction of crime, said Hirschi, resided in the fact that such acts were gratifying, readily within reach, and not difficult to commit. The key question thus was not why people committed crime but why they did *not* gratify their desires and commit crime. The answer, of course, was that individuals do not commit crime because *controls* are present.

In his career, Hirschi has promoted two different explanations as to which controls are most important in restraining criminal desires. Early on, in his 1969 book *Causes of Delinquency*, he proposed "social bond theory," which argued that control rested in the relationships or bonds that individuals had with conventional society. Later, in his 1990 book *A General Theory of Crime*, which he coauthored with Michael Gottfredson, he suggested that restraint was more of an internal process. He argued that the key causal factor was "self-control."

Hirschi was also consequential because, in *Causes of Delinquency*, he used data to argue that his control theory was superior to two other theories: "differential association theory" (or what he called "cultural deviance theory"), which we have just discussed, and "strain theory," a perspective developed by the famous Columbia University sociologist Robert K. Merton. Hirschi sought to carve up the field into *three dominant theoretical paradigms*. His project was then to show that the other two perspectives were flawed logically and empirically, and thus that his social bond theory should be the reigning theory of crime.

The third perspective in the Big Three, strain theory (Part IV), actually has two different dimensions—one showing how strain produces the societal condition of "anomie" and another focusing on what happens when individuals personally experience strain. In brief, Merton set out to explain why the United States has a high crime rate. He observed that American society is marked by a fundamental contradiction. On the one hand, people are taught to embrace the "American Dream"—the idea that *everyone* should want the goal of economic success. On the other hand, due to an unequal class structure, only some Americans have the legitimate means or opportunity to achieve this goal. This contradiction, contended Merton, created structural strain or a pressure on the *norms* governing the means that should be used to pursue success (i.e., the prescription to "work hard" or "go to school"). Ideally, individuals should use legitimate means, but the constant strain caused by the means-goal contradiction caused the regulatory norms to lose their vitality and seem less relevant. In turn, as the norms weakened—as "anomie" (or normlessness) set in—people were freer to use "whatever means necessary," including crime, to try to be successful. High rates of crime in America—and in certain deprived segments of the United States—were the result.

Other scholars—most notably Albert Cohen and the team of Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin—applied this thinking to explain delinquent acts. They focused more on what happens when individuals are blocked from achieving success goals and experience feelings of strain or "status frustration." The adaptation to this strain, they asserted, was delinquency and, when conditions were correct, the formation of delinquent subcultures. Later, Robert Agnew would broaden this theory into his "general strain theory." He noted that blocked opportunity was only one type of strain; other strains could also be a source of criminal behavior. Agnew further specified the conditions under which strains are most likely to result in crime as opposed to some other behavioral outcome.

Now let us return to Travis Hirschi. He did not fully succeed in eliminating his two theoretical rivals, although he did stir up much debate. Regardless, Hirschi was able to clearly demarcate how American criminological theory was dominated by these three main perspectives—control, differential association, and strain theories. We refer to these as the Big Three because they remain—even today—the three most significant and longstanding theories in criminology. Sociological theories that have emerged in the last three decades either have borrowed elements of these perspectives (see the integrated theories in Part XIV) or have been developed in opposition to these perspectives. It is to these oppositional or "critical" theories that our attention briefly turns.

Section 2. **Rethinking Criminology**

What goes on in the larger society often influences what goes on inside criminology. Similar to other citizens, criminologists live in and are affected by the prevailing social context. Events of the day show how they see the world. When the social context changes in significant ways, it is likely that old ways of thinking will be challenged and fresh ways of thinking will emerge. This is precisely what occurred starting in the late 1960s and into the 1970s. At this time, criminologists were moved by the events of their day to ask what role the state (or government) and power played in causing crime. A turning point in the development of criminology thus occurred that created theoretical traditions that persist to present times.

As readers may recall, this was a period of remarkable social turmoil in the United States—a time marked by the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War and the related protest movement, the state's killings of students at Kent State and inmates and guards at Attica, government scandals highlighted by Watergate, and so on. Taken together, these events prompted many in American society—including criminologists—to become deeply mistrustful of the government's power and to question whether American society was arranged in an equitable way. Theories that resonated with these sentiments emerged and quickly won adherents. The Big Three theories were often singled out as examples of how criminology had ignored the role of the state and of unjust social arrangements in crime causation. There was a call for a "new criminology"—a different way of seeing the world.

Labeling theory was one of the earliest of these new perspectives (Part VI). Rather than focus on how societal conditions generate unlawful conduct, this model argued that continued involvement in crime is caused by "societal reaction" initiated by the state's labeling of people as criminals. Crime was depicted as a transitory or experimental stage that would vanish if "left alone." But when the state pulled individuals into the criminal justice system and placed them in prison, it set in motion social processes that ensnared people in crime. Thus, a central theme of theories in this tradition is that publicly stigmatizing offenders, imprisoning them, and excluding them from conventional social roles will have the unanticipated consequence of deepening their criminality. Later scholars would continue to document how stigmatizing justice-involved individuals was criminogenic, but they would also show how some kinds of labeling—what John Braithwaite called "reintegrative shaming" that might involve "restorative justice"—might reduce crime. Along these lines, Shadd Maruna demonstrated that persistent offenders who adopt an identity that involves "redemption scripts" seek to "make good" and desist from criminal conduct.

At the core of the "new criminology" was a diverse group of writings united under the term "critical criminology" (Part VII). Often informed by the writings of Karl Marx and other radical commentators, these works reflected the growing sentiment in the United States that the nation was racked by social injustices. A central organizing theme was that "capitalism caused crime." A largely unfettered market economy was seen to create vast economic inequality, which in turn fostered conditions ripe for crimes by the rich and poor alike. Thus, the poor were driven to break the law by the suffering inherent in a harsh life of socioeconomic disadvantage, whereas the rich were able to use their corporate positions to exploit workers, "rip off" the public, and despoil the environment in the pursuit of

even greater wealth. Inequality was also reproduced within the criminal (in)justice system. The poor who dared to violate the law would feel the heavy hand of the state and be imprisoned, while the rich would visit their immense harms on society without fear of ever being charged with a crime. Jeffrey Reiman captured the prevailing sentiment of the day when he stated that "the rich get richer and the poor get prison."

One reason why the critical criminologists have continued to focus on the illegalities of the rich and powerful—especially by corporations often in collusion with the state (called "state-corporate crime")—is the extensive damage it causes. Thus, a series of highly publicized scandals—from insider trading on Wall Street to the savings and loan debacle, Enron, the Ponzi scheme of Bernard Madoff, and the stock and housing bubble that incited the financial collapse of 2008—illuminate how upperworld crime can leave investors bankrupt and taxpayers on the hook for billions of dollars. Other investigators have also demonstrated the violent harms of white-collar crime, such as when businesses pollute the environment with carcinogenic toxins, maintain unsafe work conditions that sicken and kill employees, and market products that place consumers in physical jeopardy.

Meanwhile, the growing women's movement sensitized criminologists, especially female scholars, to the way in which another form of social injustice—gender inequality—was implicated in crime. For many years, criminologists—who were almost exclusively men—felt free to limit their studies almost exclusively to male offenders. But feminist scholars—led by Freda Adler among others—brought attention both to females as criminals and then to females as victims of men (Part VIII). As this paradigm evolved, scholars such as Meda Chesney-Lind illuminated the role of patriarchy—men's dominance over women—as a structure of inequality that shaped the nature of female criminality. Much research and theorizing were conducted on how crime was a reflection of gender inequality of power and used by men to control women (e.g., domestic violence, sexual violence). Later, James Messerschmidt would attempt to show how crime was a means through which men attempted to demonstrate their "masculinity."

Finally, although not often seen as a separate school of criminology (we argue it should be), various scholars over the years have thought seriously about why African American inner-city neighborhoods are vulnerable to high rates of violent crime (Part IX). This concern is clearly warranted. Many disquieting statistics could be cited, but we can simply note that blacks are seven times more likely than whites to die of homicide. To explain this troubling and seemingly stubborn reality, the earliest scholars, many schooled in the late 1970s and 1980s, rejected racially biased theories that attributed such crime to racial inferiority or personal failings. Instead, they advanced theories emphasizing the structural conditions that prevail in inner-city neighborhoods, including concentrated disadvantage, extreme racial segregation, and deteriorating social institutions. Other scholars examined in detail how these conditions nourish the development of cultural beliefs—at times called the "code of the street"—that encourage a violent, if not lethal, response to minor affronts to honor and justify predatory conduct against the vulnerable, including the physical exploitation of women.

James Unnever and Shaun Gabbidon have pushed this area of scholarship forward with their "theory of African American offending." They show how experiences of racial discrimination, especially when youngsters are not socialized to cope effectively with such devaluation, can play a role in criminal involvement. Other scholars have illuminated how racial disparities in criminal convictions and in mass incarceration have had criminogenic effects on African American individuals and communities. More broadly, Unnever and Gabbidon have recently called for the creation of a "Black Criminology" that starts with the premise that historic and contemporary racial oppression is integral to African Americans' criminal involvement. In the post-George Floyd era, theoretical criminology will be called upon to think more deeply about how black lives matter.

Section 3. **Choice, Opportunity, and Crime**

Over the last four decades, other models have emerged that, although different, share a common link: the depiction of offenders as making choices (Parts X and XI). In the late 1970s, Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson argued, in essence, that criminologists had erred in focusing mainly on what motivates offenders to break the law and not on how the distribution of opportunities in society shapes the amount and nature of crime. Of course, a "motivated offender" is needed for a crime to occur. But Cohen and Felson built on the commonsensical observation that without access to criminal opportunity, no amount of motivation would produce a criminal act.

Cohen and Felson made an important conceptual leap, however, in dividing the general concept of opportunity into two components: "target attractiveness" and "capable guardianship." They then proposed that crime occurred when motivated offenders came into contact with attractive targets (e.g., property, persons) in the absence of capable guardianship. They further noted that substantial changes in people's daily routines in American society—such as women entering the workforce in record numbers—could result in more crime, even if the pool of motivated offenders remained unchanged. This might occur because changes in daily routines could increase offenders' access to attractive targets and reduce guardianship (e.g., as women worked, they were more vulnerable to assaults, and houses—now left vacant during the day—were more vulnerable to burglary). Because of this focus, their perspective is referred to as "routine activity theory."

Implicit in Cohen and Felson's theory was the idea that offenders make choices as to which targets are attractive and as to when guardianship is present. This view was accentuated by theorists who sought to revitalize the classical school's focus on crime as a rational choice. Some of these neoclassical criminologists were human capital economists who used economic thinking to explain a range of social behavior, including crime. Other scholars provided a more sophisticated analysis. They did not contend that crime was completely rational, but only that crime was a choice and that the likelihood of making this choice was influenced by the costs and benefits crime would bring forth.

Routine activity and rational choice theories were tied together—especially in the work of Ronald Clarke—because they encouraged a similar, practical approach to decreasing criminal behavior: situational crime prevention through opportunity reduction. In this model, the goal is to make crime more difficult to commit essentially by making potential targets less attractive and by increasing guardianship—or, if one prefers the language of rational choice theorists, by making crime less beneficial. For example, a house that once was easily burgled could be made less vulnerable—that is, less "rational" to victimize—by installing an alarm system, purchasing a dog, and cutting down bushes so that the prime entry points could be seen by neighbors close by.

This perspective is often called "environmental criminology" because it focuses on how strategically changing the physical or social environment, rather than offenders, can reduce crime events (see Part XI). Some scholars have developed theories illuminating how offenders select their targets so as to thwart these efforts. Empirical research also matters, guiding theoretical developments. A key finding is that crime is not spread evenly across neighborhoods —including in inner-city neighborhoods—but rather is concentrated on certain streets and in certain places. Building on this insight, Tamara Madensen (Herold) and John Eck explain how "place managers" determine whether locations in at-risk areas become crime free or evolve into crime "hot spots." Finally, Pamela Wilcox and colleagues remind us that crime opportunities are "multilevel," showing that opportunities for crime in any specific place is affected by conditions in the neighborhood and beyond.

A more controversial issue is whether legal punishments—increasing the certainty and severity of legal punishments —have a meaningful effect in *deterring* crime. Given the four-decade growth in mass imprisonment that eventually

resulted in more than 2.3 million people behind bars on any given day, research into and theorizing about deterrence gained increasing attention from criminologists. Again, the issue revolves around whether crime is mainly a matter of rational choice and whether the calculus used by offenders to make this choice is influenced by legal punishments and the related consequences that flow from being arrested and sanctioned by the state.

Traditionally, criminologists had been skeptical that crime could be lowered by the actions taken by the criminal justice system, including mass incarceration. They believed that the "root causes" of crime were located in social ills such as concentrated disadvantage, blocked opportunities, and disorganized communities—all problems that were beyond the power of the criminal justice system to fix. Criminals raised in these conditions would develop strains, criminal values, and weak social bonds that would make them inclined to enter crime. Unless they were rehabilitated —their wayward orientations changed—they would hardly be thwarted from breaking the law by some distant threat of being arrested and sentenced to prison. Labeling theorists even warned that stigmatizing and sanctioning offenders would increase their criminality.

Most criminologists continue to hold these views—and with good reason. But some, more conservative scholars, such as James Q. Wilson, have boldly challenged the discipline's accepted wisdoms. For one thing, they do not believe that deprivation and other "root causes" lead to crime. If there is a root cause, it is not economic poverty but moral poverty—a breakdown of morality and in our ability to teach decent values to children. In their view, bad communities do not produce bad individuals; instead, bad individuals—those not socialized to govern their lives by virtuous morals—produce bad communities.

This perspective helps to explain why these criminologists believe that our best strategies for reducing crime must involve the criminal justice system. In their view, calling for more social welfare programs to address root causes is utopian at best (it will not work) and counterproductive at worst (it teaches offenders that they are "victims" of society rather than responsible for their own choices). Instead, offenders must be sent a different message. In the community, police must teach them that even minor indiscretions—hassling pedestrians, hopping turnstiles at train stations to avoid paying fares, disturbing the peace—will not be tolerated. This is the idea of "fixing broken windows" discussed by James Q. Wilson and George Kelling. In the courts, stern punishment should be meted out to teach offenders that crime does not pay. And for those who are not educable—for those who prove to be "super-predators" or incurably "wicked"—there is a foolproof way to keep the community safe: incapacitate them in prisons for years on end.

Notably, some evidence exists that aggressive police tactics in high-crime areas—sometimes called "focused deterrence"—have helped to reduce street victimization. Still, as cases of African Americans killed by police have been caught on videos, concerns about these approaches, which involve proactive officer–citizen interactions, have been called into question. Research shows that blacks are more fearful than whites of experiencing police violence and that negative interactions can be traumatic and criminogenic. Tom Tyler has argued that citizens will view encounters with the police as legitimate if officers act with "procedural justice"—that is, by giving people a voice, treating them with respect, acting fairly, and building trust. The quality of justice, as labeling theory taught many years ago, matters.

When taken together, why were these ideas about choice, opportunity, and punishment a turning point in criminology? As suggested, the key organizing idea is that offenders are not mindless but make choices that include breaking the law. These theorists thus reject the criminological project originally defined by Lombroso: the task to search for the criminal "man" and to find out what makes him (or her) different. By contrast, scholars in Section 3 downplay the importance of this kind of behavioral investigation. They believe that we can safely assume that offenders are rational and, in turn, that we can change the choices they make by restructuring the environment in which they live and behave. In particular, regardless of their individual traits and differences, offenders will be less

likely to choose crime if we make doing so harder (e.g., put locks on windows); increase the risks of getting detected; and, if detected, raise the punishment that is forthcoming. Further, there is the ultimate method to take away the opportunity to victimize society: place the offender behind bars.

Section 4. **Development and Crime Across the Life Course**

Perhaps the most important theoretical invention over the past few decades is "developmental criminology" or—as it is also called—"life-course criminology" (Parts XII and XIII). Although these insights have long been present in the writings of individual trait theorists, throughout much of the history of American criminology, scholars simply ignored the fact that humans have a childhood. Of course, these scholars knew that offenders were not "born" at, say, age 14, but they did not give this observation any theoretical weight. Because crime rates spiked upward in adolescence and into early adulthood, most of the dominant theories focused on what might be happening during this particular segment of the life course to cause criminal involvement. But researchers eventually were confronted with a stubborn empirical finding: Most serious, chronic offenders first started to manifest problem behavior not in the teenage years but in childhood. There was, in short, continuity in problem behavior over time. If this was indeed the case, then the origins of crime must begin—if not substantially lie—early in life.

This realization pushed criminology back into the early years of life. Scholars have now started to trace what occurs from the prenatal period onward to set an individual on a trajectory either toward or away from a life in crime. Those from a biosocial perspective examine how genetics and brain maturation might interact with social factors and affect the developmental pathways youngsters pursue. But this perspective also pushed criminology forward into the adult years, exploring the eventual fate of youngsters ensnared in a criminal trajectory. Thus, scholars have advanced important theories to explain what causes continuity in offending and what might cause offenders to change and abandon a criminal life course. Theories of crime desistance focus in particular on adults and on what life events (e.g., a quality marriage and a job) and cognitive transformations (e.g., belief in "redemption scripts" or a "feared self") might spur career criminals to quit breaking the law. These are exciting theoretical developments that are increasingly shaping the field of criminology.

Section 5. **Contemporary Criminology**

What will be the main theoretical developments in contemporary criminology? Prognosticating a discipline's evolution is risky business, because shifts in thinking can occur suddenly and in unanticipated ways. Still, there are at least two areas that we anticipate will occupy much theoretical attention in the time ahead.

First, there is a continuing, if not growing, interest in theoretical integration (Part XIV). Some scholars believe in theoretical competition, with individual theories squaring off against one another to see which one will win the explanatory contest (e.g., is control theory better than social learning theory?). The other view, however, is that criminal behavior is a complex phenomenon with complex causes and will only be understood if scholars draw from diverse theories to create models capable of addressing crime's multifaceted causes. This controversy—integration versus competition—has not been settled. Even so, it seems virtually certain that efforts to synthesize knowledge about crime remain an important approach to formulating new criminological theories.

In this same tradition, scholars seeking to explain how major changes in society can impact crime are likely to bring multiple causal factors drawn from existing theories into their models. In a recent example, Robert Agnew calls attention to the potentially disquieting impact of climate change. He theorizes that many criminogenic risk factors

identified by current theories could be worsened as climate change unfolds. Thus, he offers an integrated model, arguing that climate change and its effects will impact virtually all of the major causes of crime, increasing strain, weakening control, reducing social support, fostering beliefs/values favorable to crime, contributing to traits conducive to crime, creating opportunities for crime, and increasing conflict between groups over scarce resources.

Second, seeing crime as a bad thing, criminologists have typically proposed that it must be caused by other bad things—whether a defective brain, learning a criminal culture, exposure to strain, or living in a disorganized neighborhood marked by concentrated disadvantage. Although valuable, this evil-causes-evil mindset has often blinded scholars to how positive traits (e.g., empathy, trust) and social experiences (e.g., parental love, support from others) encourage prosocial behavior, including the ability to cope effectively with negative life experiences that might otherwise be criminogenic. Perspectives such as Cullen's social support theory and Agnew's social concern theory fall under this umbrella, which is now being termed "positive criminology." This orientation coincides with a broader view that human nature is not—as once thought—only selfish and self-interested but also altruistic and cooperative. In all likelihood, this fresh line of theorizing will draw increased interest, including systematic attempts to test positive criminological theories.

The Criminological Adventure Begins

It is now time to begin your excursion through criminological theory—from past to present, and across its diverse theoretical paradigms. Our purpose in offering this guide has been to facilitate your travels by providing a detailed roadmap to the Seventh Edition of *Criminological Theory*. First, we wanted to explain how the selections of readings were made, how the book was organized, and the importance of consulting the introductory materials we have included. Second, we attempted to provide insights on the best way to use this book, including how to keep theories straight. Third, we believed it would be instructive to furnish an initial overview of the development of criminological theory and to reveal how this development was reflected in the sequencing of writings within the book. Now we are optimistic that you are prepared to learn from the readings and materials that lie ahead. We wish you all our best on your intellectual journey into the study of crime!

SECTION 1

THE RISE AND GROWTH OF AMERICAN CRIMINOLOGY

Francis T. Cullen
University of Cincinnati

Robert Agnew
Emory University

Pamela Wilcox
Pennsylvania State University

PART I

THE ORIGINS OF MODERN CRIMINOLOGY

Francis T. Cullen
University of Cincinnati

Robert Agnew
Emory University

Pamela Wilcox
Pennsylvania State University

For much of Western history the dominant theory of crime was the "demonic perspective" (Einstadter and Henry, 1995; Pfohl, 1985). Crime was said to be the result of supernatural forces. People engaged in crime because they succumbed to the temptations of evil forces, such as Satan, or because they were possessed by evil forces. As Pfohl (1985) points out, this perspective can be summed up using the language of comedian Flip Wilson: "The devil made me do it." Although no longer the dominant explanation of crime, this perspective can still be seen today. Many people, for example, argue that certain individuals engage in crime because they are "evil."

According to the demonic perspective, crime is sinful behavior or an offense against God (or the gods). It is not surprising, then, that this perspective inspired very harsh reactions to crime. Brutal methods were often used to determine whether people were possessed or had given into evil forces, with many of these methods involving torture. And those found guilty were often brutally punished. For example, they might be burned alive or otherwise slowly tortured to death in a public ceremony. These punishments were designed "to purge the body of a sinner of traces of the devil and thereby restore the body of the community as a whole to its proper relation to God" (Pfohl, 1985: 25).

The demonic perspective was dominant through the 1700s, when it was challenged during the Age of Enlightenment by a group of individuals who came to be known as the "classical" criminologists. Cesare Beccaria was the first and most prominent of these criminologists, and selections from his book, *An Essay on Crimes and Punishments*, are reprinted here. This book, first published in 1764 in Italy, was immensely popular and had a profound impact on criminology and the Western legal system.

The essential ideas of "classical theory" are quite simple. Individuals are rational beings who pursue their own interests, trying to maximize their pleasure and minimize their pain. And unless they are deterred by the threat of swift, certain, and appropriately severe punishments, they may commit crimes (harm others) in their pursuit of self-interest (for overviews, see Bernard et al., 2009; Hochstetler, 2010; Martin et al., 1990; Pfohl, 1985).

This simple theory differs from the demonic perspective in a fundamental way. Rather than arguing that crime is caused by *supernatural* or "other-worldly" forces, classical theory argues that crime is caused by natural forces or forces of this world, such as the absence of effective punishments. Supernatural forces cannot be observed, which

means that the demonic perspective cannot be tested to determine whether it is true or false—there is no way to definitively test whether crime is caused by demonic possession. As such, the demonic perspective is not a scientific theory of crime. Classical theory focuses on natural forces that can be observed. For example, we can observe how swift and certain punishments are. As a consequence, we can test classical theory, and thus it is seen as the first of the modern theories of crime.

Classical theory dominated criminology from the late 1700s until the late 1800s. It then came under heavy attack, with Cesare Lombroso being one of its primary opponents. Lombroso's own theory, first proposed in 1876, soon replaced classical theory as the dominant explanation of crime. Drawing on Darwin's theory of evolution, Lombroso argued that many criminals are "genetic throwbacks," or primitive people in the midst of modern society. Their primitive, savage state is what leads them to engage in crime. Criminals, then, are *not* normal, rational individuals who choose to engage in crime to maximize their pleasure and minimize their pain. Rather, they are fundamentally different than noncriminals, and these differences compel them to engage in crime.

Although Lombroso's theory differs from classical theory in important ways, it too argues that crime is caused by natural forces. Lombroso developed his theory after conducting extensive examinations of criminals and noncriminals. He emphasized that theories must be based on or tested against observations of the world; in fact, he attacked the "armchair theorizing" of classical criminologists. Lombroso is sometimes called the "father" of modern criminology in part because of his emphasis on scientifically testing theories. Brief selections from a book summarizing Lombroso's theory of crime are presented here.

It is important to examine the theories of Beccaria and Lombroso because of their enormous impact on contemporary theories of crime. Many modern theories of crime continue to argue that people are motivated to engage in crime through the pursuit of their self-interests and that what determines whether they engage in crime are the constraints they face, such as the threat of punishment (see the discussions of control theory in Part V and of deterrence, rational choice, and routine activity in Parts X and XI). Other theories of crime draw more heavily on the tradition established by Lombroso, arguing that individuals differ greatly in their motivation for crime, with such differences being determined by forces largely beyond their control, including biological factors and the social environment.

Classical Theory

Classical theory was developed in reaction to the harsh, corrupt, and often arbitrary nature of the legal system in the 1700s. Classical theorists were mainly interested in critiquing this system and offering proposals for its reform, but embedded in their arguments is a theory of criminal behavior.

Laws in the 1700s were frequently vague and open to interpretation. Judges, who held great power, would often interpret these laws to suit their own purposes. Thus, the punishment for a particular crime might vary widely, with some people receiving severe penalties and others not being punished at all. Poor people, who could not afford to bribe the judges, were at a special disadvantage. Further, the punishments for many crimes were quite harsh, often involving torture and death.

Beccaria and other classical theorists thought that this system was both unjust and ineffective at controlling crime. They based their critique on the work of several philosophers, particularly Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes argued that people naturally pursue their own interests and that this pursuit of self-interest frequently leads people to harm one

another. People, being rational, agree to give up some of their freedom to the state in order to prevent this harm from occurring. That is, people essentially enter into a social contract with one another, agreeing to accept certain limits on the pursuit of their self-interests so as to prevent a "war of all against all." The state enforces this social contract, establishing laws that place limits on the pursuit of self-interest and punishing people who violate these laws.

Beccaria and other classical theorists applied these ideas to the legal system. Like Hobbes, they assumed that people act in a rational manner, choosing those actions that result in the greatest pleasure and least pain. Given this assumption, how should crime be controlled?

Classical theorists argued that people will be deterred from crime if the pain associated with punishment outweighs the pleasure associated with crime. But if such punishments are to be effective, they must be well known, swift, and certain. The system will break down if the laws are unknown or obscure, if punishments are delayed, or if judges apply the laws in an arbitrary or discriminatory manner so that only some offenders are punished. Individuals must believe that if they commit a particular crime, they will quickly suffer the punishment defined in the law. For that reason, Beccaria favored clearly defined laws, public punishments, and the elimination of judicial discretion. In his view, the role of judges should be to determine guilt or innocence, not to decide on the punishment to be administered.

Crime, then, stems from the pursuit of self-interest in the absence of effective punishments. Beccaria did not fully explain why some individuals in a particular society are more likely than others to engage in crime, but he offered certain suggestions. He states, for example, that theft

> is commonly the effect of misery and despair; the crime of that unhappy part of mankind, to whom the right of exclusive property … has left but a bare existence. (1983 [1775]: 36)

The circumstances of some individuals, then, may lead them to evaluate the potential pains of punishment and pleasures of crime differently than other individuals. Poor people, for example, may be less deterred by the pains of punishment and more attracted by the pleasures of crime. These arguments, however, are only briefly mentioned and do not form a central part of classical theory.

Beccaria's book was quite popular and formed the basis for the legal systems in the United States, France, and other countries. The classical idea that offenders are rational individuals who choose to engage in crime is at the foundation of our legal system. It is the reason that we feel it is proper and just to punish offenders. The idea that the law should be applied equally to everyone (blind justice) also derives from classical theory. In particular, we tend to base punishments on the crimes committed by the offender rather than on the characteristics of the offender. Finally, current proposals to control crime by increasing the certainty and severity of punishment derive from classical theory. People, being rational, should reduce their criminal behavior in response to increases in the certainty and (perhaps) severity of punishment. Beccaria, however, argues that the certainty of punishment is more important than the severity. He states that overly harsh punishments are unnecessary, are unjust, and frequently backfire. For example, "if punishments are very severe, men are naturally led to the perpetration of other crimes, to avoid the punishment due to the first" (1983 [1775]: 43).

Even though classical theory has had a large effect on our legal system and on contemporary theories of crime, its central assumptions have been challenged. First, classical theory assumes that everyone is motivated to engage in crime through the pursuit of their self-interests. That is, everyone experiences situations where engaging in crime might help them better satisfy their interests, such as monetary interests. While this remains a central assumption of certain control and deterrence theories, most modern theories of crime argue that individuals and groups differ greatly in the motivation for crime (see, e.g., Parts III, IV, and XII of this book).

Second, classical theory assumes that people are rational and engage in crime to minimize their pain and maximize their pleasure. Some criminologists, however, argue that many offenders are not rational and that crime is not in their self-interest. Rather, they engage in crime because of forces beyond their control, and they often suffer greatly because of their behavior (see the critique of deterrence and rational choice theories in Part X). The legal system has partly recognized the validity of this challenge by changing the law so that punishments are based not simply on the offense committed but also to some extent on the characteristics and circumstances of the offender. In particular, certain categories of offenders, such as juveniles and the insane, are treated differently because they are seen as being less rational or having less control over their behavior than other offenders. And judges now have more discretion in determining the punishments to be administered, so they can take into account those circumstances that influence the commission of crimes (see Bernard et al., 2009, on the "neoclassical" school).

Third, classical theorists state that whether people engage in crime is largely dependent on the swiftness, certainty, and appropriateness of the punishments they face. Almost all criminologists now recognize that other factors have a larger impact on the likelihood of crime than the punishments administrated by the legal system. Those other factors are described throughout this text. Nevertheless, classical theory was the first of the modern scientific theories of crime and, as you will see in subsequent sections, many of its ideas live on today.

Lombroso and the "Positive School" of Criminology

Although classical theory was the dominant theory of crime for close to 100 years, it came under heavy attack in the late 1800s. One reason for this was that crime rates appeared to be increasing despite changes in the legal system inspired by classical theory. There was also some evidence that punished offenders were more, rather than less, likely to continue offending (see Bernard et al., 2009). Further, the image of the offender suggested by classical theory—a rational, self-interested person who chooses to engage in crime—was challenged by the biological sciences, particularly the work of Darwin. While several criminologists challenged classical theory during this time, the work of Lombroso attracted the most attention.

Lombroso first presented his theory of crime in 1876. He challenged the idea that criminals are normal, rational people who choose crime in order to maximize their pleasure and minimize their pain. In the initial version of his theory, Lombroso argued that criminals are anything but normal. Rather, they are "genetic throwbacks," primitive people in the midst of modern society, and their primitive or savage state compels them to engage in crime. Lombroso, a physician who worked in the military and at an asylum, based his theory on extensive examinations of criminals and noncriminals. These examinations led him to develop a list of traits that could be used to determine whether a person is one of these throwbacks or "born criminals." These traits included a large jaw and cheekbones, swollen or protruding lips, an arm span greater than the individual's height, excessive wrinkling, and a prehensile foot.

If you imagine what someone with these traits might look like, you will likely think of the stereotypical "caveman." It should be noted that Lombroso increasingly came to recognize that environmental factors also play an important role in the causation of crime, and he later argued that there were several different types of criminals, with the "born criminals" making up about one third of all criminals (see Baez, 2010; Beccalossi, 2010; DeLisi, 2013; Gibson and Rafter, 2006).

Lombroso's work helped lay the foundation for what is known as the "positive school" of criminology, which now dominates the field. The positive school argues that crime is due to forces beyond the individual's control—biological,

psychological, or social forces. The positive school is distinguished by its search for these forces or causes of crime and by its reliance on the "scientific method" in this search. That is, the positive school argues that the theories we develop must be tested against our observations of the world. The positive school is often contrasted with the classical school.

It is said that the classical school argues that individuals *freely choose* to engage in crime, whereas the positive school implies that criminals have no choice in their actions. This difference between the schools, however, has been exaggerated. As Beirne (1991) argues, classical criminologists did *not* place as much emphasis on free choice as is commonly portrayed. In fact, they point to several factors, such as the pursuit of self-interest and the nature of punishments, that strongly influence or determine whether individuals engage in crime. For this reason, Beirne contends that Beccaria's theory might better be viewed as a forerunner of positive criminology. Nevertheless, there is a clear difference in the theories; although both describe the causes or determinants of crime, they focus on rather different causes.

What does the evidence say about Lombroso's theory? His theory and other early biological theories were rather simplistic: they pointed to gross biological features that were said to distinguish criminals from noncriminals, and they argued that biological factors often lead directly to crime. These theories were rigorously evaluated during the early to middle 1900s, with researchers comparing the traits of criminals to those of carefully matched samples of noncriminals (similar in age, class, race, and so on to the criminals being studied). Such comparisons provided little support for the early biological theories. This finding, along with a concern for the policy implications of these theories (e.g., selective breeding and sterilization, justification for racist policies), led to the decline of biological theories of crime (for excellent overviews of early biological theories, see Baez, 2010; Beccalossi, 2010; Bernard et al., 2009; Brennan et al., 1995; DeLisi, 2013; Gibson, 2002; Horn, 2003; Rafter, 1997, 2004; Raine, 1993).

There has, however, been a recent resurgence of interest in biological theories of crime. The new biological theories are, of course, much more sophisticated than Lombroso's theory. They consider a range of biological factors, argue that these factors increase the likelihood that individuals will develop traits conducive to crime (biological factors do *not* lead directly to crime), and recognize that the impact of biological factors on crime is influenced by the social environment. These contemporary biological theories are described in Part XII.

References

Baez, Heidi M. 2010. “Lombroso, Cesare: The Criminal Women.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*, pp. 565–568. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Beccalossi, Chiara. 2010. “Lombroso, Cesare: The Criminal Man.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*, pp. 560–565. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Beccaria, Cesare. 1983 [1775]. *An Essay on Crimes and Punishments*. Brookline Village, MA: Branden Press.

Beirne, Piers. 1991. “Inventing Criminology: The ‘Science of Man’ in Cesare Beccaria’s *Dei Delitti E Delle Pene* (1764).” *Criminology* **29**: 777–820.

Bernard, Thomas J., Jeffrey B. Snipes, and Alexander L. Gerould. 2009. *Vold’s Theoretical Criminology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Brennan, Patricia A., Sarnoff A. Mednick, and Jan Volavka. 1995. “Biomedical Factors in Crime.” In James Q. Wilson and Joan Petersilia (eds.), *Crime*, pp. 65–90. San Francisco: ICS Press.

DeLisi, Matt. 2013. “Revisiting Lombroso.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 5–21. New York: Oxford University Press.

Einstadter, Werner and Stuart Henry. 1995. *Criminological Theory*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace.

Gibson, Mary. 2002. *Born to Crime: Cesare Lombroso and the Origins of Biological Criminology*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Gibson, Mary and Nicole Hahn Rafter. 2006. *Cesare Lombroso, Criminal Man*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Hochstetler, Andy. 2010. “Classical Perspectives.” In J. Mitchell Miller (ed.), *21st Century Criminology: A Reference Handbook*, pp. 201–209. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Horn, David G. 2003. *The Criminal Body: Lombroso and the Anatomy of Deviance*. London: Routledge.

Martin, Randy, Robert J. Mutchnick, and W. Timothy Austin. 1990. *Criminological Thought: Pioneers Past and Present*. New York: Macmillan.

Pfohl, Stephen J. 1985. *Images of Deviance and Social Control*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Rafter, Nicole. 1997. *Creating Born Criminals*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

____. 2004. “Earnest A. Hooton and the Biological Tradition in American Criminology.” *Criminology* **42**: 735–771.

Raine, Adrian. 1993. *The Psychopathology of Crime*. San Diego: Academic Press.

1.
An Essay on Crimes and Punishments*

Cesare Beccaria

Beccaria's book, An Essay on Crimes and Punishments, *presents the first of the modern or scientific theories of crime. The book, first published in 1764, became the foundation for the classical theory of criminology, which dominated explanations of crime for close to 100 years. According to classical theory, people are rational and concerned with minimizing their pain and maximizing their pleasure. Their efforts to do so often lead them to engage in crime, unless they are deterred by the threat of punishment.*

Beccaria's book is primarily concerned with criticizing the legal system in the 1700s and offering proposals for its reform, but he presents the classical theory of crime in the process. Beccaria draws heavily on Thomas Hobbes's theory of society in critiquing the legal system, and his book opens with a brief summary of that theory, reprinted in the opening paragraph here. Hobbes noted that the pursuit of self-interest often leads people to harm one another and that individuals must give up some of their liberty for the sake of "peace and security." In particular, they form nations and such nations establish laws and administer punishments to deter people from harming one another in their pursuit of their interests or "passions." However, to be effective, punishments must meet certain conditions. Beccaria describes the characteristics of effective punishments in the remainder of this selection, noting that such punishments should be set by the "sovereign" or representative of the state (not decided by judges), clearly stated, proportionate to the crime, swift, and certain (for an overview of Beccaria's work, see Carpenter, 2010; see also Sweet and Groarke, 2010, on Jeremy Bentham, another major figure in the classical school).

Beccaria's theory is reflected in modern deterrence theories, which focus on the impact of official punishments on crime. Such theories and the evidence on their validity are discussed in Part X. Briefly, some evidence shows that the certainty of punishment influences the likelihood of crime, but it is probably not among the most important causes of crime.

References

Carpenter, Andrew N. 2010. "Beccaria, Cesare: Classical School." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*, pp. 73–77. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sweet, William and Paul Groarke. 2010. "Bentham, Jeremy: Classical School." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*, pp. 88–94. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

* Excerpted from *An Essay on Crimes and Punishments*, by Cesare Beccaria. Copyright © 1983 by Branden Press (ISBN: 0-8283-1800-X; orig. published 1775), pp. 1, 4–8, 18, 31–33, 42–43, 78. Permission courtesy of Branden Books, Boston.

Of the Origin of Punishment

Laws are the conditions, under which men, naturally independent, united themselves in society. Weary of living in a continual state of war, and of enjoying a liberty which became of little value, from the uncertainty of its duration, they sacrificed one part of it, to enjoy the rest in peace and security. The sum of all these portions of the liberty of each individual constituted the sovereignty of a nation; and was deposited in the hands of the sovereign, as the lawful administrator. But it was not sufficient only to establish this deposit; it was also necessary to defend it from the usurpation of each individual, who will always endeavour to take away from the mass, not only his own portion, but to encroach on that of others. Some motives, therefore, that strike the senses, were necessary to prevent the despotism of each individual from plunging society into its former chaos. Such motives are the punishments established against the infractors of the laws. I say, that motives of this kind are necessary; because, experience shows, that the multitude adopt no established principle of conduct; and because, society is prevented from approaching to that dissolution, (to which, as well as all other parts of the physical, and moral world, it naturally tends) only by motives, that are the immediate objects of sense, and which being continually presented to the mind, are sufficient to counterbalance the effects of the passions of the individual, which oppose the general good. Neither the power of eloquence, nor the sublimest truths, are sufficient to restrain, for any length of time, those passions, which are excited by the lively impressions of present objects....

Of the Interpretation of Laws

Judges, in criminal cases, have no right to interpret the penal laws, because they are not legislators.... The laws receive their force and authority from an oath of fidelity, either tacit, or expressed, which living subjects have sworn to their sovereign, in order to restrain the intestine fermentation of the private interests of individuals. From hence springs their true and natural authority. Who then is their lawful interpreter? The sovereign, that is, the representative of society, and not the judge, whose office is only to examine, if a man have, or have not committed an action contrary to the laws....

Of the Obscurity of Laws

If the power of interpreting laws be an evil, obscurity in them must be another.... Crimes will be less frequent, in proportion as the code of laws is more universally read and understood: for there is no doubt, but that the eloquence of the passions is greatly assisted by ignorance, and uncertainty of punishments....

Of the Proportion Between Crimes and Punishments

... *It* is not only the common interest of mankind, that crimes should not be committed, but that crimes of every kind should be less frequent, in proportion to the evil they produce to society. Therefore, the means made use of by the legislature to prevent crimes, should be more powerful, in proportion as they are destructive of the public safety and happiness, and as the inducements to commit them are stronger. Therefore there ought to be a fixed proportion between crimes and punishments.

It is impossible to prevent entirely all the disorders which the passions of mankind cause in society. These disorders increase in proportion to the number of people, and the opposition of private interests.... That force, which continually impels us to our private interest, like gravity, acts incessantly, unless it meets with an obstacle to oppose it.... Punishments, which I would call political obstacles prevent the fatal effects of private interests....

Of the Intent of Punishments

The end of punishment ... is no other, than to prevent the criminal from doing further injury to society, and to prevent others from committing the like offence. Such punishments, therefore, and such a mode of inflicting them, ought to be chosen, as will make the strongest and most lasting impressions on the minds of others, with the least torment to the body of the criminal....

Of the Advantage of Immediate Punishment

The more immediately after the commission of a crime a punishment is inflicted, the more just and useful it will be.... *The degree of the punishment, and the consequences of a crime, ought be so contrived, as to have the greatest possible effect on others, with the least possible pain to the delinquent*. If there be any society in which this is not a fundamental principle, it is an unlawful society; for mankind, by their union, originally intended to subject themselves to the least evils possible.

An immediate punishment is more useful; because the smaller the interval of time between the punishment and the crime, the stronger and more lasting will be the association of the two ideas of *Crime and Punishment*; so that they may be considered, one as the cause, and other as the unavoidable and necessary effect. It is demonstrated, that the association of ideas is the cement which unites the fabric of the human intellect; without which, pleasure and pain would be simple and ineffectual sensations....

It is, then, of the greatest importance, that the punishment should succeed the crime as immediately as possible, if we intend, that in the rude minds of the multitude, the seducing picture of the advantage arising from the crime, should instantly awake the attendant idea of punishment. Delaying the punishment serves only to separate these two ideas....

Of the Mildness of Punishments

Crimes are more effectually prevented by the *certainty*, than the *severity* of punishment.... The certainty of a small punishment will make a stronger impression, than the fear of one more severe, if attended with the hopes of escaping; for it is the nature of mankind to be terrified at the approach of the smallest inevitable evil, whilst hope, the best gift of heaven, hath the power of dispelling the apprehension of a greater; especially if supported by examples of impunity, which weakness or avarice too frequently afford....

That a punishment may produce the effect required, it is sufficient that the *evil* it occasions should exceed the *good* expected from the crime; including in the calculation the certainty of the punishment, and the privation of the expected advantage. All severity beyond this is superfluous, and therefore tyrannical....

Conclusion

From what I have written results the following general theorem....

That a punishment may not be an act of violence, of one, or of many against a private member of society, it should be public, immediate and necessary; the least possible in the case given; proportioned to the crime, and determined by the laws.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to Beccaria, why is it necessary for the state to sometimes punish people?
2. Beccaria assumes that offenders are rational individuals pursuing their self-interest. Do you think this is an accurate view of all or most offenders?
3. Do you think Beccaria would favor the death penalty? Why or why not? (He discusses this issue in some detail in his *Essay on Crimes and Punishments*.)
4. Evaluate our current system of punishing offenders using the criteria for effective punishments listed by Beccaria. In particular, do we satisfy the criteria listed by Beccaria?
5. Beccaria states that the "end of punishment … is no other, than to prevent the criminal from doing further injury to society." Do you agree or do you feel that there are other purposes for punishment? Defend your answer.

2.
The Criminal Man*

Cesare Lombroso
As Summarized by Gina Lombroso Ferrero

Lombroso's theory is the most prominent of the early biological theories of crime; it replaced classical theory as the dominant explanation of crime in the late 1800s. Lombroso first presented his ideas in 1876 and then revised and expanded on them several times over the next three and a half decades. The selection that follows describes the key features of his theory, as summarized by his daughter.

Lombroso argued that crime is the result of biological differences between criminals and "normal individuals." Drawing on Darwin's evolutionary theory, he claimed that criminals are not as evolved as other individuals: they are savages in the midst of modern society (he described such people as "atavistic"). It is their savage or primitive state that causes their criminal behavior. As indicated in the following selection, Lombroso came to this conclusion while working as a physician in the army and at an asylum. His examinations of criminals convinced him of their biological inferiority, and through such examinations he developed a list of traits that could be used to distinguish "born criminals" from others. Many of these traits are listed in the selection (for excellent overviews of Lombroso's work, see Baez, 2010; Beccalossi, 2010; Bernard et al., 2009; DeLisi, 2013; Gibson, 2002; Gibson and Rafter, 2006; Horn, 2003; Martin et al., 1990; Rafter, 1997).

Lombroso's later research convinced him that environmental factors also play an important role in crime. Further, he came to the conclusion that there are actually several different types of criminals. "Born criminals," or the genetic throwbacks he first described, made up only about one third of all criminals, but the savagery of their crimes made them an especially important class of criminals. Subsequent research discredited Lombroso's arguments regarding biology, as most of the traits he listed failed to distinguish criminals from carefully matched samples of noncriminals (see Bernard et al., 2009).

Lombroso's research is important, however, because it helped establish what is known as the "positive school" of criminology. The positive school is distinguished by its search for the causes of crime, whether biological, psychological, or sociological. Positivism is also distinguished by its reliance on the scientific method: Theories must be tested against observations of the world. So even though Lombroso's theory was discredited in the early to middle part of the 1900s, his influence on criminology lives on.

References

Baez, Heidi M. 2010. "Lombroso, Cesare: The Criminal Women." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*, pp. 565–568. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Beccalossi, Chiara. 2010. "Lombroso, Cesare: The Criminal Man." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*, pp. 560–565. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Bernard, Thomas J., Jeffrey B. Snipes, and Alexander L. Gerould. 2009. *Vold's Theoretical Criminology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

DeLisi, Matt. 2013. “Revisiting Lombroso.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 5–21. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gibson, Mary. 2002. *Born to Crime: Cesare Lombroso and the Origins of Biological Criminology*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Gibson, Mary and Nicole Hahn Rafter. 2006. *Cesare Lombroso, Criminal Man*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Horn, David G. 2003. *The Criminal Body: Lombroso and the Anatomy of Deviance*. London: Routledge.

Martin, Randy, Robert J. Mutchnick, and W. Timothy Austin. 1990. *Criminological Theory: Pioneers Past and Present*. New York: Macmillan.

Rafter, Nicole Hahn. 1997. *Creating Born Criminals*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

The classical school based its doctrines on the assumption that all criminals, except in a few extreme cases, are endowed with intelligence and feelings like normal individuals, and that they commit misdeeds consciously, being prompted thereto by their unrestrained desire for evil. The offence alone was considered, and on it the whole existing penal system has been founded, the severity of the sentence meted out to the offender being regulated by the gravity of his misdeed.

The Modern, or Positive, School of Penal Jurisprudence, on the contrary, maintains that the anti-social tendencies of criminals are the result of their physical and psychic organisation, which differs essentially from that of normal individuals; and it aims at studying the morphology and various functional phenomena of the criminal with the object of curing, instead of punishing him….

If we examine a number of criminals, we shall find that they exhibit numerous anomalies in the face, skeleton, and various psychic and sensitive functions, so that they strongly resemble primitive races. It was these anomalies that first drew my father’s attention to the close relationship between the criminal and the savage and made him suspect that criminal tendencies are of atavistic origin.

When a young doctor at the Asylum in Pavia, he was requested to make a postmortem examination on a criminal named Vilella, an Italian Jack the Ripper, who by atrocious crimes had spread terror in the Province of Lombardy…. “At the sight of that skull,” says my father, “I seemed to see all at once, standing out clearly illumined as in a vast plain under a flaming sky, the problem of the nature of the criminal, who reproduces in civilised times characteristics, not only of primitive savages, but of still lower types as far back as the carnivora.”

Thus was explained the origin of the enormous jaws, strong canines, prominent zygomae, and strongly developed orbital arches which he had so frequently remarked in criminals, for these peculiarities are common to carnivores and savages, who tear and devour raw flesh. Thus also it was easy to understand why the span of the arms in criminals so often exceeds the height, for this is a characteristic of apes, whose fore-limbs are used in walking and climbing. The other anomalies exhibited by criminals—the scanty beard as opposed to the general hairiness of the body, prehensile foot, diminished number of lines in the palm of the hand, cheek-pouches, enormous development of the middle incisors and frequent absence of the lateral ones, flattened nose and angular or sugar-loaf form of the skull, common to criminals and apes; the excessive size of the orbits, which, combined with hooked nose, so often imparts to criminals the aspect of birds of prey, the projection of the lower part of the face and jaws (prognathism) found in negroes and animals, and supernumerary teeth (amounting in some cases to a double row as in snakes) and cranial bones (epactal bone as in the Peruvian Indians): all these characteristics pointed to one conclusion, the atavistic origin of the criminal, who reproduces physical, psychic, and functional qualities of remote ancestors.

Subsequent research on the part of my father and his disciples showed that other factors besides atavism come into play in determining the criminal type. These are: disease and environment. Later on, the study of innumerable offenders led them to the conclusion that all law-breakers cannot be classed in a single species, for their ranks include very diversified types, who differ not only in their bent towards a particular form of crime, but also in the degree of tenacity and intensity displayed by them in their perverse propensities, so that, in reality, they form a graduated scale leading from the born criminal to the normal individual.

Born criminals form about one third of the mass of offenders, but, though inferior in numbers, they constitute the most important part of the whole criminal army, partly because they are constantly appearing before the public and also because the crimes committed by them are of a peculiarly monstrous character; the other two thirds are composed of criminaloids (minor offenders), occasional and habitual criminals, etc., who do not show such a marked degree of diversity from normal persons....

---

* Reprinted from Cesare Lombroso, *Criminal Man*. Copyright © 1911 by G.P. Putnam's Sons. Reprinted by permission.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The positive school of criminology, which Lombroso helped found, argues that crime is not the result of free will; rather, it is due to factors over which the individual often has little or no control. As such, this school focuses less on the punishment of the offender and more on "curing" the offending. To what extent do you think crime is an act of free will or one caused by forces beyond the individual's control?
2. What policy recommendations might an adherent of Lombroso's theory make for controlling crime? (A consideration of these recommendations will help you understand one of the reasons why the theory was later attacked.)
3. List those factors said to distinguish "born criminals" from others. How would one go about providing a good test of Lombroso's theory?

PART II

THE CHICAGO SCHOOL: THE CITY, SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION, AND CRIME

Francis T. Cullen
University of Cincinnati

Robert Agnew
Emory University

Pamela Wilcox
Pennsylvania State University

As the United States proceeded into the 20th century, individualistic theories of crime enjoyed substantial popularity (Gould, 1981). Cesare Lombroso's biological theory, for example, was widely read and accepted (Lindesmith and Levin, 1937). In 1939, Harvard anthropologist E. A. Hooton not only claimed boldly that "criminals are organically inferior," but also proposed that "the elimination of crime can be effected only by the extirpation of the physically, mentally, and morally unfit; or by their complete segregation in a social aseptic environment" (quoted in Vold and Bernard, 1986: 6). Hooton's work may have been extreme, even for its time (see Merton and Montagu, 1940), but it represented a way of thinking that persists nearly a century later: The seeds of crime lie within people, and the only way to protect public safety is to incapacitate this dangerous class (see Herrnstein and Murray, 1994; cf. Cullen et al., 1997, and Gordon, 1994).

Other social observers in the early part of the century, however, criticized these individualistic theories for their myopia. While criminal anthropologists like Lombroso and Hooton focused their attention on discerning whether criminals had larger foreheads or more tattoos than noncriminals, they ignored the larger changes in society that were occurring around them. The United States was rapidly moving into the modern era, transforming itself from a land sprinkled with small, stable farming communities into a land dominated by crowded cities that were centered around booming industries and whose residents were constantly in flux. For these social observers, it defied common sense not to see how these vast changes were intimately implicated in the cause of crime. In fact, they claimed that our understanding of the origins and prevention of criminal conduct depended on a careful study of how the forces *outside* individuals prompted their willingness to break the law.

Social Disorganization in the City

Perhaps nowhere was social change more rapid and more dramatic than in the city of Chicago. When first incorporated in 1833, Chicago had a population of just over 4,000. By 1890, this number had climbed to 1 million;

and in just 20 years, the population had doubled to 2 million (Palen, 1981). Sheer numbers, however, capture only part of the changes that were taking place. Like other large cities, Chicago was the settling place for virtually every racial and ethnic group, as African Americans traveled to the North in search of a better life and immigrants from Europe ended their journey in the "windy city" that butted up against Lake Michigan. These urban newcomers typically secured work at and settled in the shadows of factories erected in the center of the city. Their lives were hard —they worked long hours in the factories and lived in overcrowded tenements dirtied by industrial pollution. Upton Sinclair captured the social reality of these inner-city neighborhoods in the title of his book *The Jungle* (1905).

In this context, it may not be surprising that scholars at the University of Chicago believed that the key to understanding crime lay not in studying the traits of individuals but in studying the traits of neighborhoods. Did it make a difference, they asked, if a child grew up in an inner-city community that was characterized by poverty, a mixing together of diverse peoples (i.e., "heterogeneity"), and by people constantly moving in and, when able, moving out (i.e., "transiency")? And if so, might not the solution to crime lie more in changing neighborhoods than in changing people?

This line of inquiry was developed most clearly by Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay (1942 [Chapter 3 in this volume]), who worked at the Institute for Social Research in Chicago and who were deeply influenced by the thinking of sociologists at the University of Chicago. To explain how cities such as Chicago develop, Ernest Burgess (1967 [1925]) had theorized that urban areas grow through a process of continual expansion from their inner core toward outer areas. As this growth process matures, we find cities that have a central business or industrial area. Just outside this area is the "zone in transition." It is here that impoverished newcomers settle, attracted by factory jobs and inexpensive housing. In a series of concentric circles, three more zones exist outside the inner city; Burgess called these the "zone of workingmen's homes," the "residential zone," and the "commuters' zone." These areas are settled by people who have adjusted to city life and have accumulated the resources to leave the zone in transition.

Shaw and McKay believed that Burgess's theory of the city might help direct their investigations of juvenile delinquency. If Burgess was correct, then rates of delinquency should be higher in the inner-city areas. In these locations, the intersection of persistent poverty, rapid population growth, heterogeneity, and transiency combined to disrupt the core social institutions of society such as the family; that is, these conditions caused *social disorganization*. They hypothesized that delinquency would be higher in these communities and lower in neighborhoods that were more affluent and stable (i.e., "organized").

But how would they test these ideas? In an innovative and enormous effort in data collection, whose results were published in *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas* (1942), Shaw and McKay analyzed how measures of crime—such as youths referred to the juvenile court, truancy, and recidivism—were distributed in the zones of the city. By hand, they mapped the addresses of each delinquent, which they then compiled to compute rates of delinquency by small census area and then by city zone. They discovered that over time, rates of crime by *area* remained relatively the same—regardless, that is, of which ethnic group resided there. This finding suggested that characteristics of the area, not of the individuals living in the area, regulated levels of delinquency. They also learned, as their theory predicted, that crime rates were pronounced in the zone of transition and became progressively lower as one moved away from the inner city toward the outer zones. This finding supported their contention that social disorganization was a major cause of delinquency (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993: 30–31).

Just how did social disorganization cause delinquency? Unfortunately, Shaw and McKay did not supply a refined discussion of this concept in which they systematically explored the dimensions of disorganization and how each one was criminogenic (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993). Even so, they broadly suggested that social disorganization referred to the breakdown of the social institutions in a community. In the inner city, then, families would be disrupted, schools would be marked by disorder, adult-run activities for youths would be sparse, churches would be poorly

attended, and political groups would be ineffectual. When such a pervasive breakdown occurred, adults would be unable to control youths or to stop competing forms of criminal organization from emerging (e.g., gangs, vice activities). This combination was highly criminogenic. Freed from adult control, youths roamed the streets, where they came into contact with older juveniles who transmitted to them criminal values and skills (see also Thrasher, 1927).

Shaw and McKay gained many of their insights on the process by which youths become embedded in delinquency from in-depth interviews—"life histories"—that they conducted with wayward adolescents (see, e.g., Shaw, 1966 [1930]). In *The Natural History of a Delinquent Career* (1976 [1931]), for example, Shaw compiled the story of Sidney Blotzman, who by age 16 had engaged in numerous crimes, including robbery and sexual assault. Shaw recorded that Sidney had begun his "career in delinquency" by age 7, a career that persisted and grew more serious as he matured. Referring to Sidney's story, Shaw noted that due to his associations with older delinquents and adult criminals, the boy "began to identify himself with the criminal world and to embody in his own philosophy of life the moral values which prevailed in the criminal groups with which he had contact" (p. 228).

But why was Sidney exposed to these criminogenic influences? Here, Shaw reminds the reader that Sidney "lived in one of the most deteriorated and disorganized sections of the city" (p. 229). In these communities, continued Shaw, "the conventional traditions, neighborhood institutions, and public opinion, through which neighborhoods usually effect a control over the behavior [of the] child, were largely disintegrated" (p. 229). The community, however, "was not only disorganized and thus ineffective as a unit of control"; in addition, "various forms of stealing and many organized delinquent and criminal gangs were prevalent in the area" (p. 229). These criminal groups competed for the lives, in effect, of the area's children. "These groups," observed Shaw, "exercised a powerful influence and tended to create a community spirit which not only tolerated but actually fostered delinquent and criminal practices" (p. 229).

In Parts III and V, we will discuss two theoretical traditions whose roots extend to the work of Shaw and McKay: differential association/social learning theory and control theory. Thus, the work of Edwin Sutherland (Chapter 7) draws directly on Shaw and McKay's contentions that social areas have different mixes of criminal and conventional influences, and that the exposure to and learning of criminal values, mainly by associating with others in the same neighborhood, is a key source of crime. Sutherland captures these ideas in his "theory of differential association," which is an effort to systematize the insights of Shaw and McKay and of other Chicago school theorists (see, e.g., Thrasher's 1927 work, *The Gang*). Similarly, early statements of control theory, such as that by Reckless (1961) and that by Reiss (1951)—both of whom studied at the University of Chicago—build directly from Shaw and McKay's observations and helped to lay the foundation for today's control theories.

It is ironic that in contemporary criminology, these two traditions, which branched off from Shaw and McKay, now are seen as rival theories of crime (cf. Akers [1998] and Matsueda [1988] with Costello [1997], Gottfredson and Hirschi [1990], and Kornhauser [1978]). Although some efforts have been made to *integrate* these two perspectives (see Thornberry, 1987), most often advocates of learning and control theories see themselves as advancing incompatible perspectives, only one of which can be correct.

Revitalizing Social Disorganization Theory

Although Shaw and McKay's work was read by subsequent generations of criminologists, by the 1960s, their theory of social disorganization had lost its appeal and its ability to direct research. Instead, other theories, advocating new

ways of thinking and identifying new questions to be answered, ascended and captured scholars' attention (see Cole, 1975; Pfohl, 1985). Beginning in the 1980s, however, Shaw and McKay's disorganization perspective earned renewed interest—an interest that has remained until this day.

In part, criminologists reconsidered the value of disorganization theory because of a more general interest in the "ecology" of crime. This approach analyzes how crime rates vary by *ecological units*, such as neighborhoods, cities, countries, states, or nations. (Recall that Shaw and McKay examined how delinquency rates varied by zones of the city.) This approach is often seen as being on the "macro level." In *micro*-level theories, the concern is with identifying how characteristics of *individuals* (e.g., personality, how much strain a person feels) are related to their involvement in criminal behavior. In *macro*-level theories, however, individuals and their traits are not studied; the concern is only with how the characteristics of geographical areas, such as whether they are disorganized, influence crime rates.

Beyond the general interest in ecological research (see Blau and Blau, 1982; Reiss and Tonry, 1986), Robert Sampson, Robert Bursik, and colleagues showed the relevance of using Shaw and McKay's theory to illuminate crime in today's society. These contributions are discussed below.

A Classic Test

Sampson (1986) argued that crime was high in inner cities because the residents had lost the capacity to exercise "informal social control." Especially in neighborhoods where most families were "broken," the adult resources needed to supervise youths and involve them in wholesome activities were depleted. Coming from a broken home per se was not the key issue, said Sampson. Rather, it was living in a neighborhood where a high proportion of families were headed by a single parent that created a context in which control could not be exercised effectively. Like Shaw and McKay, Sampson stressed that independent of the traits of individuals, communities varied in their capacity to regulate conduct and suppress criminal behavior.

With W. Byron Groves, Sampson (1989) extended this research. Using data from the British Crime Survey, the authors tested Shaw and McKay's idea that in communities marked by poverty, heterogeneity, residential transiency, and family disruption, informal relations and controls would be weakened and, as a result, crime would be high. Previously, empirical tests of Shaw and McKay's perspective had only measured the structural "antecedents" or causes of social disorganization and then examined whether these factors were related to crime (e.g., do communities with more residential mobility have higher rates of crime). These studies took for granted that the social condition in between these structural factors (on the "left" side of the causal chain) and illegal conduct (on the "right" side of the causal chain) was social disorganization. In large part, scholars did not measure social disorganization directly because the existing data sets did not contain information on the extent to which community members were socially integrated and able to exercise social control over wayward conduct. Instead, they were able to compile data on structural factors from the U.S. Census and data on crime rates from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports. Meanwhile, they had no direct measures of the "black box" that lay in between structural factors and crime rates. Again, they merely assumed that this "black box" was a weak or "disorganized" community.

The special value of Sampson and Groves's study was that the British Crime Survey included questions that could be combined to measure whether community members were willing to supervise rowdy teenagers, had friends locally, and participated in neighborhood voluntary organizations. The more these conditions were present, hypothesized Sampson and Groves, the greater the level of social organization; the less these conditions were present, the greater the level of social disorganization. When Sampson and Groves conducted their statistical analysis, they discovered that, to a large extent, the structural factors predicted their measures of social disorganization and, in turn, that

weakly organized areas did indeed have higher crime rates. In short, their data lent support to Shaw and McKay's conclusion that social disorganization was a significant cause of community rates of crime.

It is possible, of course, that other community factors, such as the presence of delinquent subcultures, could also intervene between structural factors such as poverty and transiency and crime (Veysey and Messner, 1999). Still, subsequent research has replicated Sampson and Groves's research with data drawn a decade later from the British Crime Survey, thus indicating that Sampson and Groves's results have proven to be consistent over time (Lowenkamp et al., 2003; see also Taylor, 2001). More generally, Sampson and Groves's article furnished persuasive evidence that the social disorganization perspective had a measure of validity and warranted further empirical and theoretical investigation. Indeed, this article generated considerable excitement and did much to revitalize Shaw and McKay's theory. It was not a theory tied to a particular historical juncture—pre–World War II America—but could provide insights into community differences in rates of crime in contemporary times.

Systemic Control: Private, Parochial, and Public Ties

Beginning with Sampson and Groves's classic study, tests of social disorganization theory began to draw from the *systemic model* of community attachment within the sociology literature (e.g., Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974) in order to measure *how* communities organized for effective social control. This systemic model of community attachment views the community as a "complex system of friendship and kinship networks and formal and informal associational ties rooted in family life and on-going socialization processes" (Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974: 329). Using this systemic perspective on community, scholars such as Sampson and Groves presumed that social disorganization and its accompanying weak social control emerged from an absence of strong systems of *friendship, kinship,* and *associational ties* among neighborhood residents. Conversely, a systemic conceptualization of social disorganization theory suggested that neighborhood-level density of friendship, kinship, and associational ties enhanced informal social control, thus lowering crime rates.

Key work by Robert Bursik and Harold Grasmick extended the systemic model's emphasis beyond its original focus on internal neighborhood ties as sources of organization and control. In their 1993 book, *Neighborhoods and Crime: The Dimensions of Effective Community Control* (see Chapter 4 in this part), Bursik and Grasmick present a more complex version of the systemic model that considers both intra-community and extra-community relational ties and their respective effects on neighborhood rates of crime. Specifically, they delineate three distinct types of social ties that can enhance social control of crime: *private* ties, *parochial* ties, and *external/public* ties. Private ties refer to primary and intimate interpersonal relationships, including friendships and kinships. Parochial ties are less intimate relations among residents of a neighborhood that emerge due to shared institutional or organizational affiliations (e.g., their children attend the same school, they belong to the same church) or due to neighbors' shared responsibility for supervising community youth (i.e., neighbors looking out for one another's children despite not being close friends themselves). Public ties refer to connections with agencies outside the community that could supply the neighborhood with additional resources for controlling crime. Examples of public ties are community members' solicitation of assistance or resources from local police, city council members, state and federal politicians, and area business leaders. Bursik and Grasmick suggested that private, parochial, and public ties were important sources of control, which they termed private control, parochial control, and public control, respectively. In turn, all three forms of control were theorized to curb neighborhood rates of crime.

Again, the key contribution of Bursik and Grasmick's work to the continued development of social disorganization theory is its explicit recognition that social control of crime might stem from extra-community linkages (i.e., public ties) in addition to intracommunity networks (i.e., private ties, parochial ties). In fact, research supports the

importance of community members' links to external resources for understanding neighborhood crime. For example, Vélez's (2001) study of 60 neighborhoods found that residents' ties to government and police were associated with significantly lower rates of burglary, assault, and mugging victimization. Further these public ties seemed to mediate the effect of private ties on crime, implying that strong private ties might foster the development of public ties. Vélez's analysis also revealed a significant statistical interaction between neighborhood public ties and neighborhood economic disadvantage, whereby the crime-reducing effect of these public ties were strongest in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods. A subsequent study by Vélez, Lyons, and Boursaw (2012) examined the effects of access to extra-community economic resources in the form of mortgage lending. Their analysis revealed that neighborhood-level rates of home mortgage loans were negatively related to subsequent violent crime. Similarly, Ramey and Shrider (2014) found that Seattle neighborhoods that acquired external resources in the form of Neighborhood Matching Funds appeared to reduce neighborhood rates of crime. Ethnographic research by Carr (2003, 2012) in the Chicago community of "Beltway" also supports the importance of extra-community linkages. There were a high proportion of dual-earning households in Beltway, making the formation of strong private ties difficult. However, parochial ties in conjunction with public ties were apparent and effective at controlling crime. For example, Carr witnessed a neighborhood problem-solving group work (parochial ties) with local police and politicians (public ties) to close down a nuisance tavern.

Extending Social Disorganization Theory

Theories of crime are not sacred icons to be worshiped at the altar of criminology. No matter how persuasive and elegantly stated, theoretical paradigms should be viewed as provisional understandings of social reality—important in what they allow us to see but not sacrosanct. The challenge is to illuminate how such works might be reconsidered and their explanatory power improved. In this regard, scholars have recently engaged in two lines of inquiry that extend social disorganization theory, including the systemic control model, in noteworthy ways. These two lines of inquiry are collective efficacy theory and legal cynicism theory, each discussed below.

Collective Efficacy Theory

Despite a good deal of empirical support for the systemic control model of social disorganization—from both Sampson and Groves's study and replications (see, e.g., Lowenkamp et al., 2003)—a number of other studies in the 1990s and 2000s showed that friendship and kinship ties are not always related to neighborhood crime in the manner predicted. For example, research has shown that effective crime control emerges in communities with *infrequent* interaction and relatively *weak* interpersonal ties among residents (e.g., Bellair, 1997). Moreover, other research has shown that dense personal ties among residents might actually impede effective social control because "networks connect not just do-gooders but the underbelly of social life, from drug dealers to gang members to crooked politicians" (Sampson, 2012: 151; see also Pattillo, 1998; Venkatesh, 1997). Other work has indicated that dense personal ties among neighbors only work to control crime in certain neighborhoods—such as those that are predominantly white and consist, predominantly, of two-parent households (e.g., Warner and Wilcox Rountree, 1997; Wilcox Rountree and Warner, 1999). Still other work has shown that dense personal ties only work to control particular types of crime involving certain types of offenders (Wilkinson, 2007).

In fact, though he led the development of the systemic control model of social disorganization theory, Robert Sampson has also been at the forefront of synthesizing evidence contrary to the theory and ultimately challenging the

systemic model's implicit assumption that low-crime neighborhoods are those with pervasive interpersonal ties connecting residents (e.g., Sampson, 2002). In response, some scholars have drawn upon Bursik and Grasmick's broader conceptualization of systemic control, emphasizing that ties to external, public agencies are especially key in effective control of crime (Carr, 2003; Vélez, 2001; Vélez et al., 2012). Other scholars, including Sampson, have embraced *collective efficacy theory* as a related but distinct alternative to the systemic model of social disorganization theory.

In collaboration with Stephen Raudenbush and Felton Earls, Sampson first advanced collective efficacy theory within a study examining rates of violence across 343 Chicago neighborhoods (Sampson et al., 1997; see Chapter 5 in this part; see also Sampson et al., 1999). Their work showed that "concentrated disadvantage"—a combined measure of a community's poverty, race and age composition, and family disruption—is related to neighborhood rates of violence, even controlling for the characteristics of the people surveyed. Importantly, they revealed that the effects of concentrated disadvantage are largely mediated by—that is, occur through—the degree of "collective efficacy" in the neighborhood.

But what is this concept of "collective efficacy"? As envisioned by Sampson and his coauthors, collective efficacy is a concept that includes the willingness of community residents both to exercise informal control (e.g., telling youths to quiet down) and to trust and help one another. In a way, the concept of efficacy seems like the opposite of social disorganization (Taylor, 2001: 128). If so, nothing much would be new theoretically because Sampson et al. would merely be describing the opposite end of the continuum—that is, what an organized community looks like in contrast to a disorganized community. Clearly, there is theoretical overlap between the concepts of "social disorganization" and "collective efficacy," but Sampson and his colleagues are also offering something fresh. Although their ideas are rooted in social disorganization theory, they enrich this perspective in two important ways.

First, whereas Shaw and McKay largely envisioned social organization (as opposed to disorganization) as the presence of *control*, Sampson and colleagues have added a second component: the notion that neighbors *mutually trust or support one another* (Sampson et al., 1999: 635). Trust or social support is important because it provides a basis on which neighbors might expect others to collaborate with them—to stand behind them—when it becomes necessary to exercise social support (see also Cullen, 1994 [Chapter 49]). Indeed, empirically, trust and the willingness to engage in informal control are highly intercorrelated. As Sampson et al. found, in reality, control and trust are coterminous; that is, "you don't get one without the other."

Second, social disorganization is typically portrayed as a "condition"—as a state of being into which a person moves or is born. In this sense, it is a *static* factor, or something that more or less constantly surrounds those in a neighborhood. In contrast, Sampson and his colleagues envision collective efficacy as a *dynamic* factor. It is a resource that can be mobilized when the need arises—such as when teenagers become unruly on a street corner or when drug dealers brazenly establish a "crack house" in the neighborhood.

Collective efficacy thus is not simply being organized and having close social ties, but rather is the "*process* of activating or converting social ties to achieve desired outcomes" (Sampson et al., 1999: 635, emphasis in the original). Communities with weak collective efficacy lack the closeness and trust—sometimes called "social capital"—to mobilize as a group and rid their street of troublemakers and disorder (e.g., by personally confronting people, by forming crime watches, by pressuring politicians and the police to "do something" about the problems they face). In contrast, communities high in collective efficacy can amass a unified front to make life for the wayward in their neighborhood uncomfortable by watching them closely, telling them to go elsewhere, and, if necessary, exerting political pressure and getting the police involved.

Notably, collective efficacy theory has been subjected to a variety of empirical tests, including in Sampson's important 2012 work, *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect,* where he concludes:

> The research on collective efficacy cuts across a number of different studies, investigators, specifications, time periods, outcomes, and more.... Overall the results presented here and by others in a growing number of studies around the world suggest that in communities that are otherwise similar in composition, those with higher levels of collective efficacy exhibit lower rates of crime. There is also evidence that collective efficacy is relatively stable over time and that it predicts future variations in crime, adjusting for the aggregate characteristics of individuals and traditional forms of neighborhood networks. (2012: 177–178)

As Sampson suggests, there is mounting evidence that collective efficacy affects neighborhood crime not only in Chicago but also in a variety of other cities and countries, including Sweden (Sampson and Wikström, 2008), Australia (Mazerolle et al., 2010), and China (Jiang et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2007). However, the support for collective efficacy theory is not unwavering. For example, Gerben Bruinsma and colleagues (2013) found that collective efficacy was unrelated to offense or offender rates across neighborhoods in The Hague, Netherlands. Further, a Malaysian study by Massomeh Hedayati Marzbali and colleagues (2014) found that higher perceived collective efficacy was actually positively associated with victimization likelihood. Such findings indicate that the applicability of collective efficacy should continue to be assessed in a variety of national contexts (see Bruinsma and Johnson, 2018; Wilcox et al., 2018).

In addition to evidence of collective efficacy's null effects in some national contexts, there is also evidence that its effects can be attenuated by other neighborhood characteristics, including adjacency to areas with low levels of collective efficacy and high levels of crime (Morenoff et al., 2001). Other research indicates that collective efficacy's ability to reduce crime is attenuated in the presence of strong social ties (Browning, 2009; Browning et al., 2004). Browning and colleagues attribute this conditional effect to "negotiated coexistence" between law-abiding and criminal residents: In contexts where the personal networks of law-abiding and law-violating citizens are intertwined, strong ties might actually provide social capital for the law violators, thereby compromising the expected benefit of collective efficacy (see also Pattillo, 1998; Venkatesh, 1997). Thus, the findings of Browning and colleagues imply that shared norms about control may not always translate into actual engagement in informal social control. In fact, a study of Australian neighborhoods by Wickes et al. (2017) examined the effect of neighborhood collective efficacy on residents' actual engagement in informal social control when faced with significant neighborhood problems, and their findings revealed that collective efficacy was unrelated to directly intervening in problems or calling police or other government agencies (see also Warner, 2007).

Despite some questions about the extent to which collective efficacy theory is generalizable across all contexts, collective efficacy has become the central organizing concept within the Chicago school tradition in the 21st century. Collective efficacy theory is thus having a defining influence on the study of communities and crime, and it should continue to do so well into the foreseeable future. Still, other important developments in community crime theory continue to emerge—including legal cynicism theory, discussed below.

Legal Cynicism and Community Crime

A contemporary line of inquiry explores how community *culture* in the form of *legal cynicism* influences neighborhood violence. Sampson and Bartusch (1998: 782) first introduced the concept of legal cynicism and claimed that it was a an ecologically structured normative orientation akin to "anomie about law," whereby "the rules of the dominant society (and hence the legal system) are no longer binding in a community." They presented legal cynicism as a property of a collective, independent of individual values regarding illegal behavior. Their analysis indicated that legal cynicism varied significantly across Chicago neighborhoods, and it was related to community

conditions—including structural disadvantage and residential instability—rather than individual characteristics such as race.

Kirk and Papachristos (2011) further developed the concept of legal cynicism (see Chapter 6 in this part). They suggest that legal cynicism is a cultural frame "through which individuals interpret the functioning and viability of the law and its agents" (Kirk and Papachristos, 2011: 1197). From the frame of legal cynicism, the police are viewed as illegitimate, nonresponsive to residents' needs and calls for assistance, and unable to adequately provide safety. Like Sampson and Bartusch (1998), Kirk and Papachristos (2011) treat legal cynicism as a characteristic of communities. Although individuals in the same neighborhood might have different views of law (variable in the extent to which such views are cynical), legal cynicism is the *collective view* that emerges from social interaction (for a discussion of individual experiences with legal agents, see Chapter 35 on procedural justice theory).

Legal cynicism is said to emerge from two interrelated neighborhood conditions: (1) concentrated disadvantage, and (2) previous police–resident encounters. Concentrated disadvantage often leads to legal cynicism because it breeds a general sense of alienation from society—a feeling that "the dominant societal institutions (of which the police and the justice system are emblematic) will offer little in the way of security, either economic or personal" (Kirk and Papachristos, 2011: 1198). Previous police–resident encounters, especially in disadvantaged neighborhoods, often lead to legal cynicism because there is evidence that police are less likely to file incident reports when called and more likely to harass and use force (or threats thereof) against suspects in such neighborhoods. Furthermore, information and experiences with the criminal justice system is exchanged among residents, creating collective cynicism that is independent of individual values and experiences (see also Kirk and Matsuda, 2011). Legal cynicism has consequences for neighborhood rates of violence in that it serves to constrain perceived courses of action for resolving disputes. Specifically, since police are viewed with cynicism, they are not relied upon to handle grievances. Instead, residents take matters into their own hands, which often involves use of violence. Importantly, Kirk and Papachristos stress that such violence does not reflect pro-violence values on the part of the individual residents. Rather, it reflects culturally defined appropriate action in a context in which reliance upon police is considered unhelpful. Thus, many individuals who do not personally condone violence still might resort to violence in a community with a pervasive cultural frame of legal cynicism.

Kirk and Papachristos (2011) find support for the posited causes and consequences of legal cynicism in an analysis of homicide across 343 Chicago neighborhoods. Results showed that concentrated disadvantage was positively associated with legal cynicism; and that legal cynicism, in turn, was positively related to neighborhood violence. The effect of legal cynicism on violence was observed above and beyond the significant effect of collective efficacy, suggesting that legal cynicism is an additional important concept for understanding community crime. At the same time, Kirk and Papachristos's (2011) analysis implies that legal cynicism, in part, works in conjunction with collective efficacy. Specifically, they found that legal cynicism weakened collective efficacy, thereby indirectly increasing violence.

In conclusion, collective efficacy theory and legal cynicism theory, while distinct from Shaw and McKay's original social disorganization theory, are best seen as reinforcing Shaw and McKay's ideas. That is, strong communities can act to quell disorder, while communities weakened by structural and cultural problems will be fertile soil for the growth of crime. This general theoretical orientation reminds us that individuals are not islands free from outside influences, but rather are enmeshed in a web of social relations that increase or decrease one's power to influence what transpires in one's neighborhood. Those with the misfortune of residing in isolated, impoverished, disorganized communities have the double difficulty of being exposed to conditions that might permit their criminal involvement and of being less able to do anything about crime when it occurs around them. Thus, they are at risk of being drawn into a criminal lifestyle on the one hand and on the other of being unable to prevent the disorder and victimization

they witness, if not personally experience. The vitality and efficacy of community life and relations, as Shaw and McKay understood, matter greatly; this is an insight that must be included in any systematic explanation of the uneven distribution of crime in American society.

References

Akers, Ronald L. 1998. *Social Learning and Social Structure: A General Theory of Crime and Deviance*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Bellair, Paul. 1997. "Social Interaction and Community Crime: Examining the Importance of Neighbor Networks." *Criminology* **35**: 677–703.

Blau, Judith R. and Peter M. Blau. 1982. "The Cost of Inequality: Metropolitan Structure and Violent Crime." *American Sociological Review* **47**: 114–129.

Browning, Christopher. R. 2009. "Illuminating the Downside to Social Capital: Negotiated Coexistence, Property Crime, and Disorder in Urban Neighborhoods." *American Behavioral Scientist* **52**: 1556–1578.

Browning, Christopher R., Robert D. Dietz, and Seth L. Feinberg. 2004. "The Paradox of Social Organization: Networks, Collective Efficacy, and Violent Crime in Urban Neighborhoods." *Social Forces* **83**: 503–534.

Bruinsma, Gerben J. N., and Shane D. Johnson. 2018. "Environmental Criminology: Scope, History, and State of the Art." In Gerben J. N. Bruinsma and Shane D. Johnson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Criminology*, pp. 1–31. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bruinsma, Gerben J. N., Lieven J. R. Pauwels, Frank M. Weerman, and Wim Bernasco. 2013. "Social Disorganization, Social Capital, Collective Efficacy, and the Spatial Distribution of Crime and Offenders: An Empirical Test of Six Neighbourhood Models for a Dutch City." *British Journal of Criminology* **53**: 942–963.

Burgess, Ernest W. 1967 [1925]. "The Growth of the City: An Introduction to a Research Project." In Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess (eds.), *The City*, pp. 47–62. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bursik, Robert J., Jr. 1988. "Social Disorganization and Theories of Crime and Delinquency." *Criminology* **26**: 519–551.

Bursik, Robert J., Jr. and Harold G. Grasmick. 1993. *Neighborhoods and Crime: The Dimensions of Effective Community Control*. New York: Lexington.

Carr, Patrick J. 2003. "The New Parochialism: The Implications of the Beltway Case for Arguments Concerning Informal Social Control." *American Journal of Sociology* **108**: 1249–1291.

____. 2012. "Citizens, Community, and Crime Control: The Problems and Prospects for Negotiated Order." *Criminology and Criminal Justice* **12**: 397–412.

Cole, Stephen. 1975. "The Growth of Scientific Knowledge: Theories of Crime as a Case Study." In Lewis A. Coser (ed.), *The Idea of Social Structure: Papers in Honor of Robert K. Merton*, pp. 175–220. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Costello, Barbara. 1997. "On the Logical Adequacy of Cultural Deviance Theories." *Theoretical Criminology* **1**: 403–428.

Cullen, Francis T. 1994. "Social Support as an Organizing Concept for Criminology: Presidential Address to the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences." *Justice Quarterly* **11**: 527–559.

Cullen, Francis T., Paul Gendreau, G. Roger Jarjoura, and John Paul Wright. 1997. "Crime and the Bell Curve: Lessons from Intelligent Criminology." *Crime and Delinquency* **43**: 387–411.

Gordon, Diana R. 1994. *The Return of the Dangerous Classes: Drug Prohibition and Policy Politics*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Gottfredson, Michael G. and Travis Hirschi. 1990. *A General Theory of Crime*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Gould, Stephen Jay. 1981. *The Mismeasure of Man*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Hedayati Marzbali, Massoomeh, Alrin Abdullah, Nordin Abd Razak, Mohammad Javad, and Maghsoodi Tilaki. 2014. "Examining Social Cohesion and Victimization in a Malaysian Multiethnic Neighborhood." *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice* **42**: 384–405.

Herrnstein, Richard J. and Charles Murray. 1994. *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*. New York: Free Press.

Jiang, Shanhe, Kenneth C. Land, and Jin Wang. 2013. "Social Ties, Collective Efficacy, and Perceived Neighborhood Property Crime in Guangzhou, China." *Asian Criminology* **8**: 207–223.

Kasarda, John D. and Morris Janowitz. 1974. "Community Attachment in Mass Society." *American Sociological Review* **39**: 328–339.

Kirk, David S. and Mauri Matsuda. 2011. "Legal Cynicism, Collective Efficacy, and the Ecology of Arrest." *Criminology* **49**: 443–472.

Kirk, David S. and Andrew V. Papachristos. 2011. "Cultural Mechanisms and the Persistence of Neighborhood Violence." *American Journal of Sociology* **116**: 1190–1233.

Kornhauser, Ruth Rosner. 1978. *Social Sources of Delinquency: An Appraisal of Analytic Models*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lindesmith, Alfred and Yale Levin. 1937. "The Lombrosian Myth in Criminology." *American Journal of Sociology* **42**: 653–671.

Lowenkamp, Christopher T., Francis T. Cullen, and Travis C. Pratt. 2003. "Replicating Sampson and Groves's Test of Social Disorganization Theory: Revisiting a Criminological Classic." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **40**: 351–373.

Matsueda, Ross L. 1988. "The Current State of Differential Association Theory." *Crime and Delinquency* **34**: 277–306.

Mazerolle, Lorraine, Rebecca Wickes, and James McBroom. 2010. "Community Variations in Violence: The Role of Social Ties and Collective Efficacy in Comparative Context." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **47**: 3–30.

Merton, Robert K. and M. F. Ashley Montagu. 1940. "Crime and the Anthropologist." *American Anthropologist* **42**: 384–408.

Morenoff, Jeffrey D., Robert J. Sampson, and Stephen W. Raudenbush. 2001. "Neighborhood Inequality, Collective Efficacy, and the Spatial Dynamics of Urban Violence." *Criminology* **39**: 517–560.

Palen, John J. 1981. *The Urban World*, 3rd edition. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Pattillo, Mary E. 1998. "Sweet Mothers and Gangbangers: Managing Crime in a Middle Class Neighborhood." *Social Forces* **76**: 747–774.

Pfohl, Stephen J. 1985. *Images of Deviance and Social Control: A Sociological History*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Pratt, Travis C. and Francis T. Cullen. 2005. "Assessing Macro-Level Predictors and Theories of Crime: A Meta-Analysis." In Michael Tonry (ed.), *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, Volume **32**, pp. 373–450. Chicago:

University of Chicago Press.

Ramey, David M. and Emily A. Shrider. 2014. “New Parochialism, Sources of Community Investment, and the Control of Street Crime.” *Criminology and Public Policy* **13**: 193–216.

Reckless, Walter C. 1961. *The Crime Problem*, 3rd edition. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

Reiss, Albert J., Jr. 1951. “Delinquency as the Failure of Personal and Social Controls.” *American Sociological Review* **16**: 196–207.

Reiss, Albert J., Jr. and Michael Tonry (eds.). 1986. *Communities and Crime*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sampson, Robert J. 1986. “Crime in Cities: The Effects of Formal and Informal Social Control.” In Albert J. Reiss, Jr. and Michael Tonry (eds.), *Communities and Crime*, pp. 271–311. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

____. 2002. “Transcending Tradition: New Directions in Community Research, Chicago Style.” *Criminology* **40**: 213–230.

____. 2012. *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sampson, Robert J. and Dawn Jeglum Bartusch. 1998. “Legal Cynicism and (Subcultural?) Tolerance of Deviance: The Neighborhood Context of Social Differences.” *Law and Society Review* **32**: 777–804.

Sampson, Robert J. and W. Byron Groves. 1989. “Community Structure and Crime: Testing Social-Disorganization Theory.” *American Journal of Sociology* **94**: 774–802.

Sampson, Robert J., Jeffrey D. Morenoff, and Felton Earls. 1999. “Beyond Social Capital: Spatial Dynamics of Collective Efficacy for Children.” *American Sociological Review* **64**: 633–660.

Sampson, Robert J., Stephen W. Raudenbush, and Felton Earls. 1997. “Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy.” *Science* **277** (August 15): 918–924.

Sampson, Robert J. and Per-Olof Wikström. 2008. “The Social Order of Violence in Chicago and Stockholm Neighborhoods: A Comparative Inquiry.” In Stathis N. Kalyvas, Ian Shapiro, and Tarek Masoud (eds.), *Order, Conflict, and Violence*, pp. 97–119. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Shaw, Clifford R. 1966 [1930]. *The Jack-Roller: A Delinquent Boy’s Own Story*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Shaw, Clifford R. and Henry D. McKay. 1942. *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Shaw, Clifford R. with Maurice E. Moore. 1976. [1931]. *The Natural History of a Delinquent Career*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sinclair, Upton. 1905. *The Jungle*. New York: Signet.

Taylor, Ralph B. 2001. “The Ecology of Crime, Fear, and Delinquency: Social Disorganization Versus Social Efficacy.” In Raymond Paternoster and Ronet Bachman (eds.), *Explaining Criminals and Crime: Essays in Contemporary Criminological Theory*, pp. 124–139. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

Thrasher, Frederic M. 1927. *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Thornberry, Terence P. 1987. “Toward an Interactional Theory of Delinquency.” *Criminology* **25**: 863–892.

Vélez, María B. 2001. “The Role of Public Social Control in Urban Neighborhoods: A Multilevel Analysis of Victimization Risk.” *Criminology* **39**: 837–864.

Vélez, María B., Christopher C. Lyons, and Blake Boursaw. 2012. “Neighborhood Housing Investments and Violent Crime in Seattle, 1981–2007.” *Criminology* ***50***: 1025–1056.

Venkatesh, Sudhir A. 1997. “The Social Organization of Street Gang Activity in an Urban Ghetto.” *American Journal of Sociology* **103**: 82–111.

Veysey, Bonita M. and Steven F. Messner. 1999. “Further Testing of Social Disorganization Theory: An Elaboration of Sampson and Groves’ ‘Community Structure and Crime.’” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **36**: 156–174.

Vold, George B. and Thomas J. Bernard. 1986. *Theoretical Criminology*, 3rd edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

Warner, Barbara. D. 2007. “Directly Intervene or Call the Authorities? A Study of Forms of Neighborhood Social Control within a Social Disorganization Framework.” *Criminology* **45**: 99–129.

Warner, Barbara D. and Pamela Wilcox Rountree. 1997. “Local Social Ties in a Community and Crime Model: Questioning the Systemic Nature of Informal Social Control.” *Social Problems* **44**: 520–536.

Wickes, Rebecca, John Hipp, Elise Sargeant, and Lorraine Mazerolle, L. 2017. “Neighborhood Social Ties and Shared Expectations for Informal Social Control: Do They Influence Informal Social Control Actions? *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **33**: 101–129.

Wilcox, Pamela, Francis T. Cullen, and Ben Feldmeyer. 2018. *Communities and Crime: An Enduring American Challenge*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Wilcox Rountree, Pamela and Barbara D. Warner. 1999. “Social Ties and Crime: Is the Relationship Gendered?” *Criminology* **37**: 401–425.

Wilkinson, Deanna L. 2007. “Local Social Ties and the Willingness to Intervene: Textured Views Among Violent Urban Youth of Neighborhood Social Control Dynamics and Situations.” *Justice Quarterly* **24**: 185–220.

Zhang, Lening, Steven F. Messner, and Jianhong Liu. 2007. “A Multilevel Analysis of the Risk of Household Burglary in the City of Tianjin, China.” *British Journal of Criminology* **47**: 918–937.

3.
Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas*

Clifford R. Shaw

Henry D. McKay

"Delinquency," observed Shaw and McKay in their classic book Juvenile Delinquency in Urban Areas, "has its roots in the dynamic life of the community" (1942: 435). Theories that focus only on personality or biological traits ignore that youths are surrounded by a community that they interact with over many years. These daily experiences, claimed Shaw and McKay, shape patterns of behavior.

Not all communities, however, are the same. Surveying the urban landscape, Shaw and McKay noted that in more affluent communities, "the similarity of attitudes and values as to social control is expressed in institutions and voluntary associations designed to perpetuate and protect these values" (1942: 165). But in areas wracked by poverty and constant social change, the conventional institutions become weak and a value system supportive of crime is nurtured. Shaw and McKay recognized that even in disorganized inner-city communities, parents and other adults try to inculcate children with moral values. However, they must compete against a range of criminal influences—gangs, adult criminals, ongoing illegal enterprises—that simply are not present in organized communities. Further, these influences are difficult to uproot; once delinquent traditions take hold, they are transmitted from one generation to the next, typically through interactions in neighborhood peer groups.

One criticism of Shaw and McKay's theory is that it paints too rosy a picture of communities outside the inner city. Although serious predatory crimes are more pronounced in ghetto areas, delinquency is commonplace among youths in all communities. It is possible that social disorganization and cultural values supportive of crime are more evenly spread across communities than Shaw and McKay anticipated.

Finally, Shaw and McKay's perspective has important policy implications: If community disorganization is the main source of delinquency, then the solution to crime is to organize communities. Toward this end, in the early 1930s Shaw took steps to put theory into practice by initiating the Chicago Area Project, called the "first systematic challenge to the dominance of psychology and psychiatry in public and private programs for the prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency" (Schlossman et al., 1984). The Project involved such activities as creating recreational programs, sprucing up the physical appearances of the neighborhood so as to reduce signs of disorder, working with school or criminal justice officials to see how problem youths might be helped, and using community residents to counsel the neighborhood's youngsters. The precise effectiveness of the Chicago Area Project is not known, although some evidence exists that it helped to reduce delinquency (Schlossman et al., 1984). Regardless, the Project illuminates an insight that has relevance to today: Interventions—whether by the police or by correctional officials—that ignore community dynamics will be limited in their ability to prevent the onset of criminal conduct.

Reference

Schlossman, Steven, Gail Zellman, and Richard Shavelson, with Michael Sedlak and Jane Cobb. 1984. *Delinquency Prevention in South Chicago: A Fifty-Year Assessment of the Chicago Area Project*. Santa Monica,

CA: RAND.

It is clear from the data included in this volume that there is a direct relationship between conditions existing in local communities of American cities and differential rates of delinquents and criminals. Communities with high rates have social and economic characteristics which differentiate them from communities with low rates. Delinquency—particularly group delinquency, which constitutes a preponderance of all officially recorded offenses committed by boys and young men—has its roots in the dynamic life of the community.

... It may be observed, in the first instance, that the variations in rates of officially recorded delinquents in communities of the city correspond very closely with variations in economic status. The communities with the highest rates of delinquents are occupied by those segments of the population whose position is most disadvantageous in relation to the distribution of economic, social, and cultural values. Of all the communities in the city, these have the fewest facilities for acquiring the economic goods indicative of status and success in our conventional culture. Residence in the community is in itself an indication of inferior status, from the standpoint of persons residing in the more prosperous areas. It is a handicap in securing employment and in making satisfactory advancement in industry and the professions. Fewer opportunities are provided for securing the training, education, and contacts which facilitate advancement in the fields of business, industry, and the professions.

The communities with the lowest rates of delinquents, on the other hand, occupy a relatively high position in relation to the economic and social hierarchy of the city. Here the residents are relatively much more secure; and adequate provision is offered to young people for securing the material possessions symbolic of success and the education, training, and personal contacts which facilitate their advancement in the conventional careers they may pursue....

---

* Reprinted from Clifford R. Shaw and Henry D. McKay, *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas*. Copyright © 1942 by the University of Chicago Press. Reprinted by permission of the University of Chicago Press.

Differential Systems of Values

In general, the more subtle differences between types of communities in Chicago may be encompassed within the general proposition that in the areas of low rates of delinquents there is more or less uniformity, consistency, and universality of conventional values and attitudes with respect to child care, conformity to law, and related matters; whereas in the high-rate areas systems of competing and conflicting moral values have developed. Even though in the latter situation conventional traditions and institutions are dominant, delinquency has developed as a powerful competing way of life. It derives its impelling force in the boy's life from the fact that it provides a means of securing economic gain, prestige, and other human satisfactions and is embodied in delinquent groups and criminal organizations, many of which have great influence, power, and prestige.

In the areas of high economic status where the rates of delinquents are low there is, in general, a similarity in the attitudes of the residents with reference to conventional values, as has been said, especially those related to the welfare of children. This is illustrated by the practical unanimity of opinion as to the desirability of education and constructive leisure-time activities and of the need for a general health program. It is shown, too, in the subtle, yet easily recognizable, pressure exerted upon children to keep them engaged in conventional activities, and in the resistance offered by the community to behavior which threatens the conventional values. It does not follow that all the activities participated in by members of the community are lawful; but, since any unlawful pursuits are likely to be carried out in other parts of the city, children living in the low-rate communities are, on the whole, insulated from direct contact with these deviant forms of adult behavior.

In the middle-class areas and the areas of high economic status, moreover, the similarity of attitudes and values as to social control is expressed in institutions and voluntary associations designed to perpetuate and protect these values. Among these may be included such organizations as the parent-teachers associations, women's clubs, service clubs, churches, neighborhood centers, and the like. Where these institutions represent dominant values, the child is exposed to, and participates in a significant way in one mode of life only. While he may have knowledge of alternatives, they are not integral parts of the system in which he participates.

In contrast, the areas of low economic status, where the rates of delinquents are high, are characterized by wide diversity in norms and standards of behavior. The moral values range from those that are strictly conventional to those in direct opposition to conventionality as symbolized by the family, the church, and other institutions common to our general society. The deviant values are symbolized by groups and institutions ranging from adult criminal gangs engaged in theft and the marketing of stolen goods, on the one hand, to quasi-legitimate businesses and the rackets through which partial or complete control of legitimate business is sometimes exercised, on the other. Thus, within the same community, theft may be defined as right and proper in some groups and as immoral, improper, and undesirable in others. In some groups wealth and prestige are secured through acts of skill and courage in the delinquent or criminal world, while in neighboring groups any attempt to achieve distinction in this manner would result in extreme disapprobation. Two conflicting systems of economic activity here present roughly equivalent opportunities for employment and for promotion. Evidence of success in the criminal world is indicated by the presence of adult criminals whose clothes and automobiles indicate unmistakably that they have prospered in their chosen fields. The values missed and the greater risks incurred are not so clearly apparent to the young.

Children living in such communities are exposed to a variety of contradictory standards and forms of behavior rather than to a relatively consistent and conventional pattern. More than one type of moral institution and education are

available to them. A boy may be familiar with, or exposed to, either the system of conventional activities or the system of criminal activities, or both. Similarly, he may participate in the activities of groups which engage mainly in delinquent activities, those concerned with conventional pursuits, or those which alternate between the two worlds. His attitudes and habits will be formed largely in accordance with the extent to which he participates in and becomes identified with one or the other of these several types of groups.

Conflicts of values necessarily arise when boys are brought in contact with so many forms of conduct not reconcilable with conventional morality as expressed in church and school. A boy may be found guilty of delinquency in the court, which represents the values of the larger society, for an act which has had at least tacit approval in the community in which he lives. It is perhaps common knowledge in the neighborhood that public funds are embezzled and that favors and special consideration can be received from some public officials through the payment of stipulated sums; the boys assume that all officials can be influenced in this way. They are familiar with the location of illegal institutions in the community and with the procedures through which such institutions are opened and kept in operation; they know where stolen goods can be sold and the kinds of merchandise for which there is a ready market; they know what the rackets are; and they see in fine clothes, expensive cars, and other lavish expenditures the evidences of wealth among those who openly engage in illegal activities. All boys in the city have some knowledge of these activities; but in the inner-city areas they are known intimately, in terms of personal relationships, while in other sections they enter the child's experience through more impersonal forms of communication, such as motion pictures, the newspaper, and the radio.

Other types of evidence tending to support the existence of diverse systems of values in various areas are to be found in the data on delinquency and crime.... [V]ariations by local areas in the number and rates of adult offenders were presented. When translated into its significance for children, the presence of a large number of adult criminals in certain areas means that children there are in contact with crime as a career and with the criminal way of life, symbolized by organized crime. In this type of organization can be seen the delegation of authority, the division of labor, the specialization of function, and all the other characteristics common to well-organized business institutions wherever found.

Similarly, the delinquency data presented graphically on spot maps and rate maps in the preceding pages give plausibility to the existence of a coherent system of values supporting delinquent acts. In making these interpretations it should be remembered that delinquency is essentially group behavior. A study of boys brought into the Juvenile Court of Cook County during the year 1928 revealed that 81.8% of these boys committed the offenses for which they were brought to court as members of groups. And when the offenses were limited to stealing, it was found that 89% of all offenders were taken to court as group or gang members. In many additional cases where the boy actually committed his offense alone, the influence of companions was, nevertheless, apparent. This point is illustrated in certain cases of boys charged with stealing from members of their own families, where the theft clearly reflects the influence and instigation of companions, and in instances where the problems of the boy charged with incorrigibility reveal conflicting values, those of the family competing with those of the delinquent group for his allegiance.

The heavy concentration of delinquency in certain areas means, therefore, that boys living in these areas are in contact not only with individuals who engage in proscribed activity but also with groups which sanction such behavior and exert pressure upon their members to conform to group standards. Examination of the distribution map reveals that, in contrast with the areas of concentration of delinquents, there are many other communities where the cases are so widely dispersed that the chances of a boy's having intimate contact with other delinquents or with delinquent groups are comparatively slight.

The importance of the concentration of delinquents is seen most clearly when the effect is viewed in a temporal perspective. The maps representing distribution of delinquents at successive periods indicate that, year after year, decade after decade, the same areas have been characterized by these concentrations. This means that delinquent boys in these areas have contact not only with other delinquents who are their contemporaries but also with older offenders, who in turn had contact with delinquents preceding them, and so on back to the earliest history of the neighborhood. This contact means that the traditions of delinquency can be and are transmitted down through successive generations of boys, in much the same way that language and other social forms are transmitted....

The way in which boys are inducted into unconventional behavior has been revealed by large numbers of case studies of youths living in areas where the rates of delinquents are high. Through the boy's own life-story the wide range of contacts with other boys has been revealed. These stories indicate how at early ages the boys took part with older boys in delinquent activities, and how, as they themselves acquired experience, they initiated others into the same pursuits. These cases reveal also the steps through which members are incorporated into the delinquent group organization. Often at early ages boys engage in malicious mischief and simple acts of stealing. As their careers develop, they become involved in more serious offenses, and finally become skilled workmen or specialists in some particular field of criminal activity. In each of these phases the boy is supported by the sanction and the approbation of the delinquent group to which he belongs....

Taken together, these studies indicate that most delinquent acts are committed by boys in groups, that delinquent boys have frequent contact with other delinquents, that the techniques for specific offenses are transmitted through delinquent group organization, and that in his officially proscribed activity the boy is supported and sustained by the delinquent group to which he belongs.

Differential Social Organization

Other subtle differences among communities are to be found in the character of their local institutions, especially those specifically related to the problem of social control. The family, in areas of high rates of delinquents, is affected by the conflicting systems of values and the problems of survival and conformity with which it is confronted. Family organization in high-rate areas is affected in several different ways by the divergent systems of values encountered. In the first place, it may be made practically impotent by the existing interrelationships between the two systems. Ordinarily, the family is thought of as representing conventional values and opposed to deviant forms of behavior. Opposition from families within the area to illegal practices and institutions is lessened, however, by the fact that each system may be contributing in certain ways to the economic well-being of many large family groups. Thus, even if a family represents conventional values, some member, relative, or friend may be gaining a livelihood through illegal or quasi-legal institutions—a fact tending to neutralize the family's opposition to the criminal system.

Another reason for the frequent ineffectiveness of the family in directing the boys' activities along conventional lines is doubtless the allegiance which the boys may feel they owe to delinquent groups. A boy is often so fully incorporated into the group that it exercises more control than does the family. This is especially true in those neighborhoods where most of the parents are European-born. There the parents' attitudes and interests reflect an Old World background, while their children are more fully Americanized and more sophisticated, assuming in many cases the role of interpreter. In this situation the parental control is weakened, and the family may be ineffective in competing with play groups and organized gangs in which life, though it may be insecure, is undeniably colorful, stimulating, and enticing.

A third possible reason for ineffectiveness of the family is that many problems with which it is confronted in delinquency areas are new problems, for which there is no traditional solution. An example is the use of leisure time by children. This is not a problem in the Old World or in rural American communities, where children start to work at an early age and have a recognized part in the system of production. Hence, there are no time-honored solutions for difficulties which arise out of the fact that children in the city go to work at a later age and have much more leisure at their disposal. In the absence of any accepted solution for this problem, harsh punishment may be administered; but this is often ineffective, serving only to alienate the children still more from family and home.

Other differences between high-rate and low-rate areas in Chicago are to be seen in the nature of the existing community organization. Thomas and Znaniecki have analyzed the effectively organized community in terms of the presence of social opinion with regard to problems of common interest, identical or at least consistent attitudes with reference to these problems, the ability to reach approximate unanimity on the question of how a problem should be dealt with, and the ability to carry this solution into action through harmonious co-operation.

Such practical unanimity of opinion and action does exist, on many questions, in areas where the rates of delinquents are low. But, in the high-rate areas, the very presence of conflicting systems of values operates against such unanimity. Other factors hindering the development of consistently effective attitudes with reference to these problems of public welfare are the poverty of these high-rate areas, the wide diversity of cultural backgrounds represented there, and the fact that the outward movement of population in a city like Chicago has resulted in the organization of life in terms of ultimate residence. Even though frustrated in his attempts to achieve economic security and to move into other areas, the immigrant, living in areas of first settlement, often has defined his goals in

terms of the better residential community into which he hopes some day to move. Accordingly, the immediate problems of his present neighborhood may not be of great concern to him….

Briefly summarized, it is assumed that the differentiation of areas and the segregation of population within the city have resulted in wide variation of opportunities in the struggle for position within our social order. The groups in the areas of lowest economic status find themselves at a disadvantage in the struggle to achieve the goals idealized in our civilization. These differences are translated into conduct through the general struggle for those economic symbols which signify a desirable position in the larger social order. Those persons who occupy a disadvantageous position are involved in a conflict between the goals assumed to be attainable in a free society and those actually attainable for a large proportion of the population. It is understandable, then, that the economic position of persons living in the areas of least opportunity should be translated at times into unconventional conduct, in an effort to reconcile the idealized status and their practical prospects of attaining this status. Since, in our culture, status is determined largely in economic terms, the differences between contrasted areas in terms of economic status become the most important differences. Similarly, as might be expected, crimes against property are most numerous.

The physical, economic, and social conditions associated with high rates of delinquents in local communities occupied by white population exist in exaggerated form in most of the Negro areas. Of all the population groups in the city, the Negro people occupy the most disadvantageous position in relation to the distribution of economic and social values. Their efforts to achieve a more satisfactory and advantageous position in the economic and social life of the city are seriously thwarted by many restrictions with respect to residence, employment, education, and social and cultural pursuits. These restrictions have contributed to the development of conditions within the local community conducive to an unusually large volume of delinquency….

The development of divergent systems of values requires a type of situation in which traditional conventional control is either weak or nonexistent. It is a well-known fact that the growth of cities and the increase in devices for transportation and communication have so accelerated the rate of change in our society that the traditional means of social control, effective in primitive society and in isolated rural communities, have been weakened everywhere and rendered especially ineffective in large cities. Moreover, the city, with its anonymity, its emphasis on economic rather than personal values, and its freedom and tolerance, furnishes a favorable situation of the development of devices to improve one's status, outside of the conventionally accepted and approved methods. This tendency is stimulated by the fact that the wide range of secondary social contacts in modern life operates to multiply the wishes of individuals. The automobile, motion picture, magazine and newspaper advertising, the radio, and other means of communication flaunt luxury standards before all, creating or helping to create desires which often cannot be satisfied with the meager facilities available to families in areas of low economic status. The urge to satisfy the wishes and desires so created has helped to bring into existence and to perpetuate the existing system of criminal activities.

It is recognized that in a free society the struggle to improve one's status in terms of accepted values is common to all persons in all social strata. And it is a well-known fact that attempts are made by some persons in all economic classes to improve their positions by violating the rules and laws designed to regulate economic activity. However, it is assumed that these violations with reference to property are most frequent where the prospect of thus enhancing one's social status outweighs the chances for loss of position and prestige in the competitive struggle. It is in this connection that the existence of a system of values supporting criminal behavior becomes important as a factor in shaping individual life-patterns, since it is only where such a system exists that the person through criminal activity may acquire the material goods so essential to status in our society and at the same time increase, rather than lose, his prestige in the smaller group system of which he has become an integral part.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to say that a community is socially "disorganized"? Why is crime less likely to occur in an organized community?
2. Why do Shaw and McKay take special pains to point out that delinquency usually occurs in groups? How do they believe that peer groups in the inner city contribute to the causation of crime?
3. Although written several decades ago, how might Shaw and McKay's theory help to explain the occurrence of street violence in today's inner-city communities?
4. Would Shaw and McKay favor efforts to fight crime by "getting tough" and locking up more offenders, including juveniles, in prison?

4.
Systemic Control and Crime*

J. Bursik Bursik, Jr.

Harold G. Grasmick

Bursik and Grasmick (1993) present a systemic control model of community rates of crime that both clarifies and extends previous work in the Chicago school tradition, including Shaw and McKay's social disorganization theory. Shaw and McKay's (1942) pathbreaking work indicated that high rates of poverty, ethnic heterogeneity, and instability among inner-city communities created social disorganization, which in turn fostered high rates of juvenile delinquency. Shaw and McKay suggested that socially disorganized communities contained weak institutions, thus leaving the neighborhood with little basis for articulating, upholding, and achieving shared community values. Additionally, disorganized communities were fertile grounds for the development of "oppositional subcultures" that could teach youths an alternative, criminal way of life. Shaw and McKay's social disorganization theory fell from prominence during the 1950s, but then enjoyed a rebirth starting around 1980, ushered by Kornhauser's (1978) proposed reconceptualization of the theory. In her "pure control" vision for social disorganization theory, she dropped the idea that disorganized communities contained oppositional subcultures that taught youngsters criminal ways. She proposed, more simply, the following: high rates of poverty, racial/ethnic heterogeneity, and residential mobility created social disorganization, which weakened informal social control of crime (for a review, see Cullen and Wilcox, 2015).

Kornhauser's reformulation of social disorganization theory precipitated theoretical work, including work by Bursik and Grasmick (1993), that clarified the mechanism of informal social control. In describing more fully community-level informal social control, Bursik and Grasmick (1993) draw upon the systemic model of community attachment, *which views the community as a "complex system of friendship and kinship networks and formal and informal associational ties rooted in family life and on-going socialization processes" (Kasarda and Janowitz 1974: 329). Using this systemic view of community, Bursik and Grasmick posit that a neighborhood's capacity to informally control crime is linked to the density of friendship, kinship, and associational ties among its residents (see also Bursik, 1988; Sampson, 1988; Sampson and Groves, 1989). However, Bursik and Grasmick (1993) go further and suggest that extra-community relational ties also impact informal social control and neighborhood rates of crime.*

More fully, Bursik and Grasmick's systemic model of crime recognizes three types of social ties that can affect a community's ability to adequately control crime: private ties, parochial ties, and public/external ties. Each of these types of ties is linked to a unique form, or level, of social control. Private ties refer to intimate, affective intracommunity networks, including friendships and kinships. Control from these types of ties comes in the form of threatened withdrawal of sentiment or support (Bursik and Grasmick (1993) :34).

Parochial ties refer to relationships among neighbors that "do not have the same sentimental basis as the affective networks [private ties];" they are more superficial in nature (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993:35). They emerge through membership in neighborhood organizations (i.e., people who get acquainted through neighborhood

meetings or events), or simply through the course of daily activities (i.e., neighbors seeing one another regularly as they go about). Parochial ties engender control through "the ability of local neighborhoods to supervise the behavior of their residents" (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993:35). Parochial ties are utilitarian relationships that help create a shared sense of responsibility for surveilling neighborhood streets and supervising resident activities.Public/external ties refer to the solicitation of resources from outside the community—resources that foster effective control. Examples of public ties, and associated and public-level control, include a community's ability to lobby industry and government in order to keep jobs from moving out of the neighborhood, or a community's ties to agencies that make important decisions about "demolition and construction, disinvestment of city resources, and the creation of social climates conducive to real estate panics" (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993: 53–54).

Private, parochial, and external/public ties—and the social controls they were presumed to elicit—serve as the core of Bursik and Grasmick's (1993) systemic model of crime (see Figure 4.1). Their theoretical model suggests the following sequence: (1) socioeconomic conditions within a neighborhood influence its residential stability and racial/ethnic heterogeneity; (2) residential stability and racial/ethnic heterogeneity in turn influence private and parochial networks; (3) the strength of private and parochial networks affect the solicitation of external resources (public ties); (4) private, parochial, and public ties influence the exercise of private, parochial, and public control, respectively; (5) private and parochial ties also influence the effective socialization of youths; (6) levels of private, parochial, and public control, as well as and the effectiveness of socialization of community youths, impact community rates of crime. In summary, the theory suggests that poorer socioeconomic conditions foster higher levels of mobility and heterogeneity that weaken private, parochial, and public ties; weak ties are associated with poor socialization and ineffective social control, resulting in relatively higher community rates of crime.

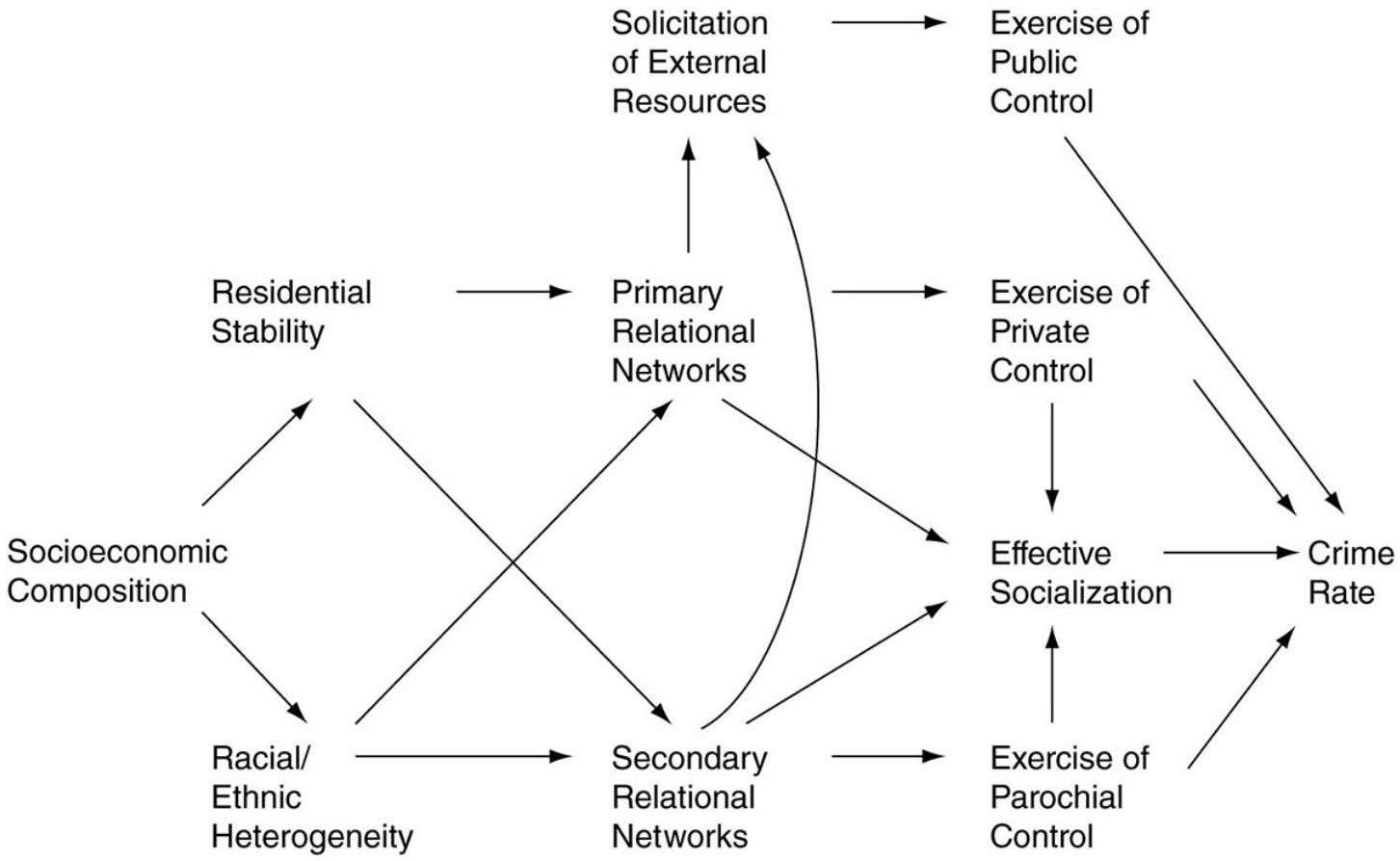


FIGURE 4.1 **The Basic Systemic Model of Crime.**

The systemic model of crime has received support. For example, Sampson and Groves's (1989) classic study showed that private and parochial ties/control were related to rates of crime across British neighborhoods. A replication of that study by Lowenkamp, Cullen, and Pratt (2003) revealed similar support. Other studies using data from neighborhoods in various U.S. cities also provide some support for the systemic model's posited relationships between intracommunity ties, informal social control, and community rates of crime (see, e.g., Bellair and Browning, 2010; Warner, 2003, 2007). However, other studies indicate that private and parochial ties may not translate into effective control in certain communities, such as predominantly black or racially/ethnically mixed neighborhoods, neighborhoods with a large number of female-headed households, and neighborhoods that contain gangs or are proximal to neighborhoods with gangs (e.g., Pattillo, 1998; Venkatesh, 1997; Warner and Wilcox Rountree, 1997; Wilcox Rountree and Warner, 1999).

Research that includes measures of public ties are particularly supportive of Bursik and Grasmick's emphasis on connections to external/public resources. For example, a study by Vélez (2001) showed that public ties to city police agencies were associated with lower neighborhood rates of household and personal victimization. Furthermore, the effects of private ties on rates of victimization appeared to be mediated by public ties—consistent with Bursik and Grasmick's contention that public ties are most likely to emerge in neighborhoods with stronger private (and parochial) ties (see Figure 4.1). Another example involves qualitative research within a Chicago neighborhood, where Carr (2003, 2012) observed that bridging partnerships between neighborhood problem-solving groups and the police and other government agencies were effective in addressing "nuisance property," such as a local business that becomes a neighborhood hot spot for crime and disorder.

References

Bellair, Paul E. and Christopher R. Browning. 2010. "Contemporary Disorganization Research: An Assessment and Further Test of the Systemic Model of Neighborhood Crime." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **47**: 496–521.

Bursik, Robert J., Jr. 1988. "Social Disorganization and Theories of Crime and Delinquency." *Criminology* **26**: 519–551.

Carr, Patrick J. 2003. "The New Parochialism: The Implications of the Beltway Case for Arguments Concerning Informal Social Control." *American Journal of Sociology* **108**: 1249–1291.

____. 2012. "Citizens, Community, and Crime Control: The Problems and Prospects for Negotiated Order." *Criminology and Criminal Justice* **12**: 397–412.

Cullen, Francis T. and Pamela Wilcox. 2015. "Introduction: The Legacy of Ruth Rosner Kornhauser." In Francis T. Cullen, Pamela Wilcox, Robert J. Sampson, and Brenden Dooley (eds.), *Challenging Criminological Theory: The Legacy of Ruth Rosner Kornhauser—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **19**, pp. 1–19. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Kasarda, John D. and Morris Janowitz. 1974. "Community Attachment in Mass Society." *American Sociological Review* **39**: 328–339.

Kornhauser, Ruth Rosner. 1978. *Social Sources of Delinquency: An Appraisal of Analytic Models*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lowenkamp, Christopher T., Francis T. Cullen, and Travis C. Pratt. 2003. "Replicating Sampson and Groves's Test of Social Disorganization Theory: Revisiting a Criminological Classic." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **40**: 351–373.

Pattillo, Mary E. 1998. "Sweet Mothers and Gangbangers: Managing Crime in a Middle-Class Neighborhood." *Social Forces* **76**: 747–774.

Sampson, Robert J. 1988. “Local Friendship Ties and Community Attachment in Mass Society: A Multilevel Systemic Model.” *American Sociological Review* **53**: 766–779.

Sampson, Robert J. and W. Byron Groves. 1989. “Community Structure and Crime: Testing Social-Disorganization Theory.” *American Journal of Sociology* **94**: 774–802.

Shaw, Clifford R. and Henry D. McKay. 1942. *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Vélez, María B. 2001. “The Role of Public Social Control in Urban Neighborhoods: A Multilevel Analysis of Victimization Risk.” *Criminology* **39**: 837–864.

Venkatesh, Sudhir A. 1997. “The Social Organization of Street Gang Activity in an Urban Ghetto.” *American Journal of Sociology* **103**: 82–111.

Warner, Barbara D. 2003. “The Role of Attenuated Culture in Social Disorganization Theory.” *Criminology* **41**: 73–98.

____. 2007. “Directly Intervene or Call the Authorities? A Study of Forms of Neighborhood Social Control within a Social Disorganization Framework.” *Criminology* **45**: 99–129.

Warner, Barbara D. and Pamela Wilcox Rountree. 1997. “Local Social Ties in a Community and Crime Model: Questioning the Systemic Nature of Informal Social Control.” *Social Problems* **44**: 520–536.

Wilcox Rountree, Pamela and Barbara D. Warner. 1999. “Social Ties and Crime: Is the Relationship Gendered?” *Criminology* **37**: 401–425.

Reprinted with permission from: Bursik, Robert J. Jr., and Harold G. Grasmick. 1993. *Neighborhoods and Crime: The Dimensions of Effective Community Control*. New York: Lexington Books. Chapter 2 (pp. 24–59).

Social Disorganization

The Original Shaw and McKay Thesis

In 1921, Clifford Shaw began collecting a set of data from the Cook County (Illinois) Juvenile Court, the Cook County Boys' Court, and the Cook County Jail that included the home address, the offense, the age, and the gender of the offender. Little progress was made in this endeavor until 1926, when the study became an integral part of the work conducted by the newly established Department of Research Sociology at the Institute for Juvenile Research in Chicago (see Shaw et al. 1929:ix). In 1927, Frederick Zorbaugh, Leonard Cottrell, Jr., and, most important, Henry McKay joined the staff of the Institute to work on this project.

In all, eight primary series of data were collected (see Shaw et al. 1929: Chapter 3):6

1. The male truants (aged eight to sixteen) brought before the Juvenile Court on truancy petitions between 1917 and 1927 (N = 5,159)
2. The alleged delinquent boys (aged ten to sixteen) dealt with by juvenile police officers during 1926 (N = 9,243)
3. A series identical to (2) for 1927 (N = 8,591)
4. The boys (aged ten to sixteen) referred to the Juvenile Court of Cook County between 1917 and 1933 (N = 8,141)
5. A series identical to (4) for 1900–1906 (N = 8,056)
6. The boys (aged seventeen to twenty) brought before the Boys Court of Chicago on felony charges between 1924 and 1926 (N = 6,398)
7. The adult offenders (aged seventeen to seventy-five) placed in the Cook County Jail during 1920 (N = 7,541)
8. The girls (aged ten to seventeen) brought before the Juvenile Court of Cook County (N = 2869)

The acquisition of these data was not considered to be a one-time effort of the Institute for Juvenile Research. Rather, the data collection was instituted as an ongoing part of the Institute's operation. For the purposes of this chapter, the most important additions were series identical to (4) for the years 1927–1933 (N = 8,411; Shaw and McKay 1942), 1934–1940 (N = 9,849), 1945–1951 (N = 8,041), 1954–1957 (N = 9,830), 1958–1961 (N = 14,167), and 1962–1965 (N = 12,844; all series subsequent to 1927–1933 discussed in Shaw and McKay 1969). Through these efforts, Shaw and McKay were able to compile a dataset containing the addresses of male adolescents referred to the Cook County Juvenile Court from 1900 through 1965; the magnitude of this effort has never even been approximated in any other criminological study of which we are aware.

The residential address of each individual reflected in this database was plotted (by hand!) on a base map of the city of Chicago (see Shaw et al. 1929:24) for a full description of the process) and then copied into outline maps of Chicago by means of a reflector and glass-top table. The rates of delinquency (defined in terms of the number of boys referred to juvenile court) were then computed on the basis of census tracts, the official local community areas of Chicago, and one-square-mile areas of the city, which was their most common operational definition of the neighborhood.

On the basis of visual inspections of these maps, supplemented by some rudimentary statistical tests, Shaw and McKay reached two very important conclusions in the 1942 monograph. The first … [was that] the relative distribution of delinquency rates remained fairly stable among Chicago's neighborhoods between 1900 and 1933 despite dramatic changes in the ethnic and racial composition of these neighborhoods. The second conclusion laid the groundwork for their application of the social disorganization approach: delinquency rates were negatively correlated with distance from the central business district. Given the positive, correlation of neighborhood economic status with distance from the center of the city, this finding indicated that delinquency rates were negatively correlated with the economic composition of local communities.

It is important to stress the central difference between their documentation of that negative association and their theoretical understanding of the relationship, for it has led to some very basic misunderstandings of the social disorganization perspective. Shaw et al. (1929) were greatly influenced by the human ecology perspective that was developing at the University of Chicago he ecological approach of Park and Burgess argued that areas characterized by economic deprivation tended to have high rates of population turnover because they were undesirable residential areas and people would abandon them when it became economically feasible. In addition, this rapid compositional change made it difficult for these communities to mount a concerted resistance against the influx of potentially threatening groups. Therefore, poor neighborhoods also tended to be characterized by racial and ethnic heterogeneity. Shaw and McKay argued that these characteristics made it very difficult for the neighborhood to achieve the common goals of its residents, a situation they called social disorganization, drawing from the seminal work of W. I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki (1920).

The causal linkage between social disorganization and juvenile delinquency rates was not clearly explicated by Shaw and McKay. In various sections of their work, they freely draw on elements of strain, cultural conflict, and control theories (see Kornhauser 1978). However, given the intimate theoretical connection between processes of rapid ecological change and the social disorganization framework, a control-theoretic approach offers perhaps the best general basis for understanding the Shaw and McKay argument. Rapid population turnover and heterogeneity can decrease the ability of a neighborhood to control itself in order to provide an environment relatively free of crime for three basic reasons (see Bursik 1988:521):

1. Institutions pertaining to internal control are difficult to establish when many residents are "uninterested in communities they hope to leave at the first opportunity" (Kornhauser 1978:78).
2. The development of primary relationships that result in informal structures of neighborhood control is less likely when local networks are in a continual state of flux (Berry and Kasarda 1977).
3. Heterogeneity impedes communication and thus obstructs the quest to solve common problems and attain common goals (Kornhauser 1978:75).

Thus, weak structures of formal and informal control decrease the costs associated with deviation within the group, making high rates of crime and delinquency more likely. Framed in this manner, the social disorganization approach of Shaw and McKay is clearly a systemic theory of neighborhood crime control.

The Systemic Implications of the Basic Social Disorganization Model

The most important source of confusion concerning social disorganization is the fact that Shaw and McKay sometimes did not clearly differentiate the presumed outcome of social disorganization (i.e., increased rates of delinquency) from disorganization itself. This tendency led some to equate social disorganization with the

phenomena it was intended to explain, an interpretation clearly not intended by Shaw, McKay, and their associates (1929:205–206). For example, Bernard Lander (1954:10) concluded that the value of the social disorganization construct is "dubious in view of the fact that social disorganization itself has to be defined as a complex of a group of factors in which juvenile delinquency, crime, broken homes … and other socio-pathological factors are included." Thus, Lander defined delinquency as social disorganization. It must be noted that Shaw and McKay were not totally responsible for this muddled distinction, for Stephen Pfohl (1985:167) has pointed out that the classic disorganization theorists of sociology often used a single indicator, such as a delinquency rate, as "both an example of disorganization and something caused by disorganization" (see his example concerning the mental health studies of Paris and Dunham 1939).

The modern reformulation of social disorganization as a systemic model of neighborhood control can clarify this distinction significantly. The instability and heterogeneity of local communities is assumed to affect the three levels of social control discussed by Hunter (1985). At the private level, ongoing changes in the residential population of a neighborhood make it very difficult to establish and maintain intimate primary ties within the community. Thus, affective relational networks tend to be fairly superficial and transitory, making the threatened withdrawl of sentiment, support, and esteem a relatively ineffective form of control. As Greenberg et al. (1985:46) have observed, while gossip, or the threat of it, is a powerful means of social control, its effectiveness depends on the inability of people to hide details of one's life from other members of the peer group. When the emotional relationships within this peer group are fairly superficial, this is easily accomplished.

While neighborhood instability makes the development of deep and lasting affective relational networks very difficult, heterogeneity in the area limits the breadth of such networks (see Gans 1962; Suttles 1968). This is nicely illustrated in Sally Merry's (1981) description of a public housing project populated by Chinese, blacks, whites, and Hispanics. Although over half the families had lived in the project for more than ten years and there was substantial daily contact among members of these groups when using the project facilities, friendship networks rarely crossed racial and ethnic boundaries. In such a situation, the overall capability of affective networks to control the behavior of the residents is extremely restricted. For example, Merry notes (p. 96) that when some of the black youths living in the project heard that the Chinese residents considered them to be criminals, "they were intrigued but unconcerned and made no effort to alter their behavior."

Recall that the second level of community control, which Hunter (1985) calls parochial, refers to relationships among the residents that do not have the same sentimental basis as the affective networks. Therefore, at this level of self-regulation, the systemic control of crime partly reflects the ability of local neighborhoods to supervise the behavior of their residents. Stephanie Greenberg and her colleagues (1982a, 1982b, 1985, 1986) have identified three primary forms of such supervision:

1. Informal surveillance: the casual but active observation of neighborhood streets that is engaged in by individuals during daily activities.
2. Movement-governing rules: the avoidance of areas in or near the neighborhood or in the city as a whole that are viewed as unsafe.
3. Direct intervention: questioning strangers and residents of the neighborhood about suspicious activities. It may also include chastening adults and admonishing children for behavior defined as unacceptable (1982b:147–148).

Instability and heterogeneity also weaken the supervisory capabilities of these parochial networks. Greenberg et al. (1982a) show that residents are not likely to intercede in criminal events that involve strangers and are reluctant to

assume responsibility for the welfare of property that belongs to people they barely know. Therefore, supervision is less likely in areas in which there is not a relatively stable population base.

The social boundaries that may exist between groups in heterogeneous neighborhoods can also decrease the breadth of supervisory activities due to the mutual distrust among groups in such areas. Merry (1981:123) notes that robberies were committed within the housing project described above without fear of apprehension owing to the anonymity caused by the composition of the project. Mark Granovetter's (1973) discussion of urban networks suggests that in neighborhoods in which individuals are relationally connected to every other member of their network but to no one outside that network, supervisory activities have to develop independently within each network to ensure success in the control of crime throughout the community (see pp. 1373–1374). Thus, racial and ethnic heterogeneity may lead to a differential capacity of neighborhoods to exert parochial control.

The systemic reformulation of the social disorganization approach does not assume that the private and parochial levels of control only have effects on the level of neighborhood crime through the dynamics of affectively based expectations and supervisory capacities. In fact, to concentrate exclusively on these forms of community self-regulation would seriously distort the original argument of Shaw and McKay for, as Kornhauser (1978:38) has argued, they were also centrally concerned with the "effectiveness of socialization in preventing deviance." Shaw and McKay (1969:172) argued, for example, that children living in areas of low economic status are "exposed to a variety of contradictory standards and forms of behavior rather than to a relatively consistent and conventional pattern." Such a statement obviously indicates that there are subcultural aspects to the general Shaw and McKay model, and they eventually argued that certain neighborhoods were characterized by a "coherent system of values supporting delinquent acts" (1969:173). However, Kornhauser has observed that the cultural assumptions are not a necessary component of the social disorganization model. Rather, she argues that it is more consistent with the rest of their orientation to focus on the variability in the effectiveness of local structures of conventional socialization found in urban neighborhoods.

Some aspects of the socialization process entail processes of control at both the private and parochial level. For example, few criminologists would dispute the contention that the family represents one of the key socializing agencies in the United States. For example, in their recent discussion of low "self-control" as a key element of criminality, Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi (1990:97–98) suggest that children are most likely to develop self-control when (1) their behavior is closely monitored, (2) deviant behavior is recognized by others when it occurs, and (3) such behavior is punished. Neighborhoods characterized by social disorganization are least likely to provide this type of setting for child rearing.

Sampson (1986, 1987a) has been perhaps most successful in incorporating family dynamics into the systemic neighborhood control approach to social disorganization, arguing that in relatively stable neighborhoods, parents often take on the responsibility for the behavior of youth other than their own children. However, in communities characterized by residential instability and heterogeneity and a high proportion of broken and/or single-parent families, the likelihood of effective socialization and supervision is reduced and it becomes difficult to link youths to the wider society through institutional means. Thus, cohesive family structures are effective sources of control "because they are aware of and intervene in group activities … that are usually the predecessors of involvement in more serious delinquent activities" (1987a:107).

Unfortunately, other institutions of socialization have not received a great deal of attention in the social disorganization literature. This is most apparent in the general neglect of the educational process, even though it has been shown that rates of high school suspension are related to the neighborhood contexts in which the schools are embedded (see Hellman and Beaton 1986). The ethnographic work of Gary Schwartz (1987) suggests that the failure to consider the role of educational institutions within the larger context of the neighborhood may seriously limit our

understanding of the processes of internal self-regulation. For example, he notes the example of Parsons Park, in which the local schools serve as "the cultural battleground of the community" (p. 50). In this neighborhood, it is primarily through the educational system that ethnic traditions, religious faith, family patterns, and other community standards are "woven into the fabric of local institutions." Yet in a second neighborhood located in the same city, the local high school "is experienced in the classroom as having little connection with the larger society's goals and values" (p. 222). It is no coincidence that these two areas also have very different rates of juvenile delinquency; the second, for example, has a heavy concentration of gang activity.

Although Shaw and McKay (1969) noted an association between rates of truancy and delinquency, they never fully developed an argument pertaining to the role of neighborhood schools. Neither did they discuss in any detail the role of local religious institutions, although Avery Guest and Barrett Lee (1987) have shown that a key church-related activity is the provision of social services aimed at the resolution of local community problems. Therefore, the role of local institutions (other than the family) as agents of control was relatively undeveloped by Shaw and McKay.

Perhaps the greatest shortcoming of the basic social disorganization model is the failure to consider the relational networks that pertain to the public sphere of control. The implications of this shortcoming have been illustrated in several studies that document the existence of stable neighborhoods with extensive interpersonal networks that nevertheless have relatively high rates of crime and delinquency (see, for example, Whyte 1981; Suttles 1968; Moore 1978; Horowitz 1983). The existence of such neighborhoods is an important contradiction of the predictions of traditional social disorganization approaches, which have focused only on the mutual linkages of residents. Efforts to explain this contradiction sometimes have led to the consideration of nonsystemic dynamics (often focusing on culture) that are logically inconsistent with the assumptions of a systemic model (see Shaw and McKay 1969 and Kornhauser's critique 1978).

However, as many urban analysts have noted (see, for example, Lewis and Salem 1986), it is very difficult to significantly affect the nature of neighborhood life through the efforts of local community organizations alone. Rather, these groups must be able to negotiate effectively with those agencies that make decisions relating to the investment of resources in the area that may foster the kinds of control that we have been discussing. For example, Whyte (1981:273) clearly argues that the problems he observed in the "Cornerville" section of Boston were due to the lack of effective ties between the neighborhood and the broader society; a similar argument is found in Suttles (1968). Therefore, a consideration of the public bases of systemic control is crucial to a full understanding of the relationship between neighborhood dynamics and crime.

The powerful potential for these external resources to foster a community's capacity for control is illustrated vividly in the history of the Conservative Vice Lords, one of Chicago's "supergangs" (for an excellent review of this history, see Dawley 1992). In 1968 and 1969, the Lords were able to solicit funds successfully from outside of their community (most notably from the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations) to develop a series of neighborhood-based programs. Although the central area of their territory generally was considered to be one of the most dangerous in Chicago, Dawley (1992) has argued that important changes in neighborhood life occurred during this period, including a significant decline in gang activity and a reduction in the fear of crime. Unfortunately, the Lords became involved in a series of intense clashes with City Hall and encountered problems with their tax-exempt status as an organization. As a result, the funding disappeared, and ten years later most of the Lords were either reinvolved in serious crime or dead, and the neighborhood regained its status as an "urban cemetery" (Dawley 1992:190).

Therefore, the existence of stable, high-crime neighborhoods in itself does not call the validity of the systemic model into question. Rather, it emphasizes the need to expand the focus of control beyond the internal dynamics of the community. We will examine recent extensions of the systemic approach that have attempted to address this issue

later in this chapter. A summary of the basic systemic reformulation of the social disorganization model is presented in Figure 4.1....

The Public Level of Systemic Crime Control

As noted above, Shaw and McKay at least implicitly assumed that the ecological distribution and movement of populations within an urban area reflected the "natural" market of housing demand. Yet as Suttles (1972:41) has noted, modern neighborhoods reflect not only the economic processes considered by Shaw and McKay, but also "politics and some cultural image of what the city ought to be like." Thus, as Finestone (1976) has shown, the primary thrust of Shaw and McKay's model (as well as almost all subsequent work in that tradition) gives the impression that the composition and internal organization of local communities are relatively independent of the broader political and economic dynamics of the city (also see Bursik 1989). As a result, the public level of systemic control (Hunter 1985:233), which reflects the ability of a neighborhood to influence political and economic decision making and to acquire externally based goods and services that may increase its ability to control the level of crime in the area, has received almost no attention from social disorganization researchers.

Such an omission is simply not supported by work in the area of urban sociology. Recall that the human ecology framework assumes that as racial and ethnic groups are assimilated into the occupational structure of an urban area, they will be able to relocate into progressively more desirable residential neighborhoods. Therefore, as Theodore Hershberg and his colleagues (1979) have observed, the ecological structure of the city is the "material expression" of the occupational opportunity structure. Unfortunately, as industries have been economically enticed into suburban and rural locations, many residents of central-city neighborhoods no longer have easy access to the manufacturing jobs that traditionally provided the opportunity for occupational mobility among urban immigrant groups, especially in the older, Northern cities. Hershberg et al. (p. 73), for example, note that Philadelphia lost 75,000 manufacturing jobs between 1930 and 1970. Likewise, between 1954 and 1982, Chicago experienced a decrease from 10,288 to 5,203 manufacturing establishments, and the number of workers they employed fell from 615,700 to 277,000.

Changes in the political economies of urban areas should be a central consideration in systemic models of neighborhood crime, for the stability of neighborhoods depends in part on the stability of jobs (see Hershberg et al., p. 78). Loic Wacquant and William Wilson (1989) note that the exodus of manufacturing jobs from central cities and the accompanying shift toward service industries and occupations have resulted in the social and economic marginalization of blacks and the deterioration of predominantly black neighborhoods. Such developments can have devastating effects on die ability of local communities to act as agents of social control. For example, Wacquant and Wilson provide data (pp. 22–24) suggesting that there has been a decline in attachment to and identification with the neighborhood, fewer social ties with other community residents, and a loss of strength in local community organizations. Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison (1982) also note that the closing of manufacturing plants is typically accompanied by strained family and social relationships and a general decline in social cohesion.

A focus on the public level of crime control would examine how neighborhoods have lobbied industry and government in an effort to keep such jobs available to neighborhood residents. A relatively large literature has emerged on the reactions of local communities to the impending closing or relocation of industrial plants (see, for example, Bluestone and Harrison 1982, Buss and Redburn 1983, or Portz 1990). While the full implications of such community dynamics have yet to be incorporated into systemic models of crime control, there have been some attempts to examine one of the outcomes of this process–the emergence of the black underclass.

Most notable in this regard has been the work of Ralph Taylor and Jeanette Covington (1988), who argue that the increasing social isolation of the urban underclass leads to a heightened sense of relative deprivation, which in turn

should increase the likelihood of violent crimes. They test this proposition using 1970 and 1980 neighborhood-level data collected in Baltimore. Overall, they find that both relative deprivation and the more traditional variables used in social disorganization studies are related to violent crime. In the underclass neighborhoods, for example, relative deprivation was more strongly related to murder rates than the stability of the neighborhood; however, the reverse was true for crimes of assault. In addition, they find that the relative effects of these two sets of variables depend on the economic composition of the neighborhood. For example, evidence is presented that the social disorganization model is more powerful than relative deprivation in explaining changes in the rates of violent crimes in neighborhoods experiencing rapid economic improvement through the process of gentrification. Such results suggest that modem urban dynamics related to the changing political economies of American cities have significantly modified the role of economic deprivation as a cause of neighborhood crime rates. Future investigations of this issue should lead to some important improvements in the systemic model.

Although the occupational opportunity structure found in modern metropolitan areas is one arena in which neighborhoods may attempt to exert public control, others are equally pertinent to a systemic approach to crime. Just as the traditional human ecology model assumed that the occupational opportunity structure was relatively open to all immigrant groups, it also assumed that the extent to which housing was available to such groups was primarily determined by the dynamics of the free market.... This has not been the case since World War II with the development of public bureaucracies mandated to determine the allocation and use of land. The decisions of such agencies can dramatically affect the stability of neighborhoods through demolition and construction, disinvestment of city resources, and the creation of social climates conducive to real estate panics (see Skogan 1986:206–207).

As was the case with the political economy, there have been very few attempts to examine how such political dynamics might be reflected in the crime rates of the affected areas. One exception is Bursik's (1989) study of public housing project construction.... This controversial type of planned community change has resulted in some pronounced conflicts between residents and the local government. To a large extent, this conflict reflects the general public image that such housing is primarily designed for slum clearance and is usually designated for location in rundown areas (see Foley 1973). Therefore, residents either may feel that they have been abandoned by the local government or may perceive that the future of the community has been greatly jeopardized....

Decisions have to be made concerning the placement of such projects. If a strictly open-market housing mechanism prevailed, one would expect that these units would be built in areas in which the costs to the program were minimal, in terms of both the value of the land that had to be purchased and the fair market rents that the federal government would be willing to subsidize.... On the other hand, if in fact these locational decisions reflected the outcome of conflict-based political decisions, one would expect that the neighborhoods least able to organize an effective resistance to their construction would be the primary targets.

Bursik (1989:115–116) presents evidence that the public housing built in Chicago ... was most likely to be constructed in areas characterized by high rates of residential instability. In addition, the market value of the occupied housing units in the neighborhood, which was used to represent the costs involved in the purchase of land or demolition of existing units, was not related to the likelihood that public housing would be erected in Chicago's local communities. This finding is extremely significant, for it indicates that the dynamics typically associated with the existence of an open, competitive housing market were not related to these political decisions. Rather, neighborhoods characterized by such construction tended to be those least able to exert effective public control over these events.

While the construction of public housing did not lead to any significant changes in the racial and economic composition of Chicago's neighborhoods, there was a marked association with the subsequent degree of instability in these areas: on the average, neighborhoods experiencing such construction were characterized by an 8 percent increase in instability in 1980 over what would have been expected on the basis of the 1970 patterns. Given the

significant effect of instability on the delinquency rates of Chicago's neighborhoods (p. 116), such findings indicate that the political decision making associated with the construction of such projects indirectly accelerated existing rates of delinquency.

Other characteristics of the housing market that may be related to the level of crime and delinquency found within a neighborhood also fall within the domain of the public order of control. James Burnell (1988) has shown that when an individual or family makes decisions about a potential residential location, the characteristics of that particular neighborhood are not the only aspects of the location that are taken into consideration. On the basis of his findings that the rate of crime and racial/ethnic composition of neighboring communities also play an important role in such decisions, Burnell argues that potential residents are concerned about the possibilities of crime spillover (see Hakim and Rengert 1981) and the effects on future property values.

As Suttles notes (1972:201), many adults in communities in which there is a perceived threat of unwanted racial invasion from nearby neighborhoods may support juveniles in illegal activities that are considered by the adults to represent a degree of protection of life and property from the "dangerous" residents of adjacent communities. Such dynamics are a hallmark of what he has referred to as the "defended community" (1968, 1972). This position is strongly supported by the work of Hirsch, who has documented the "communal" aspects of most of Chicago's housing riots that occurred between 1947 and 1957 (1983:Chapter 3). For example, he notes that while most of the persons arrested during these riots were young, they were fully supported by older men and women. Therefore, the "violent ones who were most often arrested were the community's representatives, not … its aberrations" (1983:74)….

The findings of the studies that have been discussed in this section all suggest that the inability to address issues of public control has been a significant shortcoming of the traditional systemic approaches and has led to a seriously incomplete understanding of the neighborhood dynamics related to crime and delinquency. However, they also indicate that such research is possible….

Conclusion

In general, the predictions of the systemic model have received support in a wide number of contexts. Nevertheless, it should be obvious to the reader that, because of serious data-related deficiencies, we still have a very incomplete empirical documentation of how neighborhood processes evolve to make criminal behavior of residents more or less likely.

Despite these limitations, the important modifications of the traditional social disorganization model that have been discussed indicate that it is not... [an] old framework with little relevance to modem criminology. Rather, the research that has been generated suggests that it is easily adaptable to modern development in urban sociology. Thus, the future of this tradition appears to be bright and exciting.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What were several problems with Shaw and McKay's original social disorganization theory? How did its modern reformulation as a systemic model change the theory?
2. What are the three types of ties/networks that are key to crime control in Bursik and Grasmick's systemic model? How does each type of tie elicit social control?
3. Are the three types of ties discussed by Bursik and Grasmick (1993) independent or interrelated? Explain.
4. Think of the neighborhood in which you live. Is Bursik and Grasmick's systemic model helpful in explaining why your neighborhood has low/medium/high crime? Explain.

5.
Collective Efficacy and Crime*

Robert J. Sampson

Stephen W. Raudenbush

Felton Earls

Crime, including violent crime, is not evenly distributed in the United States. Some cities, for example, are safer than others; and, within urban areas, some neighborhoods are safer than other neighborhoods. As we have seen in Part II of this book, Shaw and McKay and their intellectual descendants have confronted this daunting task of explaining why some places are more dangerous than other places.

One strategy for distinguishing communities with high and low crime rates has been to focus on structural characteristics. In general, this approach has involved listing conditions that might be undesirable—such as poverty, residential instability, and the prevalence of broken homes—and seeing if these factors might be related to high crime rates (see also Pratt and Cullen, 2005). These "structural antecedents," as they are sometimes called, are important to identify. But they leave one question unanswered: In between the undesirable structural conditions and crime, what actually goes on to make people break the law at such a high rate?

Robert Sampson, Stephen Raudenbush, and Felton Earls set out to solve this mystery. They based their 1997 research on data that was part of a larger longitudinal study based in Chicago, Illinois (called the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods*). In particular, they relied on data collected in 1995 from 8,782 residents in 343 Chicago neighborhoods. This information allowed them to do two important things.*

First, because the project actually surveyed individuals (as opposed to using census information), Sampson et al. could control for characteristics of people that might potentially account for crime in a neighborhood. For example, it could be argued that crime is higher in certain neighborhoods not because of some feature of the neighborhood, but because people who are prone to commit crime have moved into and now reside in the neighborhood. This is called a "compositional effect"; crime is high because individuals with criminal traits "compose" the area's population. Second, Sampson and his colleagues could take the answers that individuals in each neighborhood gave to questions and aggregate them. In this way, they could create measures for each neighborhood on how the residents, as a group or collective, differed from one another. This would allow them to assess what is called the "contextual effect" of a community on crime. "Collective efficacy," the key concept of Sampson et al., was constructed in this way and is a contextual effect in their theory. The authors examined whether, beyond the compositional effects of individual traits, collective efficacy explained neighborhood differences in crime.

Originally, Sampson et al. identified two separate contextual factors—features of the neighborhood—that they believed would explain "what went on" between the structural conditions, which they called "concentrated disadvantage," and crime rates. Drawn from Sampson's earlier work (see, e.g., Sampson and Groves, 1989), one factor was "informal social control" or the willingness of neighbors to intervene if they saw wrongdoing going on. The second factor was "social cohesion and trust," or how closely people in an area were tied to and supported each

other. When they undertook their empirical analysis, however, Sampson et al. discovered that informal social control and social cohesion and trust were highly intercorrelated. This finding meant that these two factors were not separate conditions but part of some broader underlying construct.

What might this construct be? Sampson and his colleagues then invented the idea *of "collective efficacy." They hypothesized that when people in a neighborhood trusted and supported one another, they had a basis for binding together to control disorderly and criminal behavior. This did not mean that people went about fighting crime on a daily basis. Rather, collective efficacy implied that when disruptive conduct arose, the people in these neighborhoods had the cohesiveness to act in an "effective" way to solve the problem. Collective efficacy is thus a resource that is activated in crucial situations (see also Sampson, 2011; Sampson, et al., 1999; Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999).*

In contrast, when neighborhoods are wracked by concentrated disadvantage (e.g., poverty, disrupted families), residential instability, and large populations of immigrants, the residents often are less able to forge close ties, to trust one another, and to exercise informal social control. Lacking collective efficacy, in short, causes disorder and crime to emerge and to spiral out of control. This is what Sampson et al. believed was occurring in Chicago neighborhoods with high crime rates.

Sampson et al. were able to show that spatial differences in collective efficacy—even controlling statistically for compositional effects—helped to account for neighborhood differences in crime rates. In doing so, they provided important evidence that collective efficacy might be the key community-level condition that lies in between structural factors and crime rates (see also Sampson, 2006, 2012). Since Sampson et al.'s initial study, collective efficacy has received wide, though not wholly unwavering, support in other research (for a recent review, see Wilcox et al., 2018). It thus seems likely that macro-level theorizing about crime rates will be influenced by the model of collective efficacy for some time to come.

References

Pratt, Travis C. and Francis T. Cullen. 2005. "Assessing Macro-Level Predictors and Theories of Crime: A Meta-Analysis." In Michael Tonry (ed.), *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, Volume **32**, pp. 373–450. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sampson, Robert J. 2006. "Collective Efficacy Theory: Lessons Learned and Directions for Future Inquiry." In *Francis T. Cullen, John Paul Wright, and Kristie R. Blevins (eds.), Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **15**, pp. 149–167. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

____. 2011. "Communities and Crime Revisited: Intellectual Trajectory of a Chicago School Education." In *Francis T. Cullen, Cheryl Lero Jonson, Andrew J. Meyer, and Freda Adler (eds.), The Origins of American Criminology—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **16**, pp. 63–85. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

____. 2012. *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sampson, Robert J. and W. Byron Groves. 1989. "Community Structure and Crime: Testing Social-Disorganization Theory." *American Journal of Sociology* **94**: 774–802.

Sampson, Robert J., Jeffery D. Morenoff, and Felton Earls. 1999. "Beyond Social Capital: Spatial Dynamics of Collective Efficacy for Children." *American Sociological Review* **64**: 633–660.

Sampson, Robert J. and Stephen W. Raudenbush. 1999. "Systematic Social Observation in Public Spaces: A New Look at Disorder in Urban Neighborhoods." *American Journal of Sociology* **105**: 603–651.

Sampson, Robert J., Stephen W. Raudenbush, and Felton Earls. 1997. “Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy.” *Science* **277** (August 15): 918–924.

Wilcox, Pamela, Francis T. Cullen, and Ben Feldmeyer. 2018. *Communities and Crime: An Enduring American Challenge*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

For most of this century, social scientists have observed marked variations in rates of criminal violence across neighborhoods of U.S. cities. Violence has been associated with the low socioeconomic status (SES) and residential instability of neighborhoods. Although the geographical concentration of violence and its connection with neighborhood composition are well established, the question remains: why? What is it, for example, about the concentration of poverty that accounts for its association with rates of violence? What are the social processes that might explain or mediate this relation? In this article, we report results from a study designed to address these questions about crime and communities.

Our basic premise is that social and organizational characteristics of neighborhoods explain variations in crime rates that are not solely attributable to the aggregated demographic characteristics of individuals. We propose that the differential ability of neighborhoods to realize the common values of residents and maintain effective social controls is a major source of neighborhood variation in violence. Although social control is often a response to deviant behavior, it should not be equated with formal regulation or forced conformity by institutions such as the police and courts. Rather, social control refers generally to the capacity of a group to regulate its members according to desired principles—to realize collective, as opposed to forced, goals. One central goal is the desire of community residents to live in safe and orderly environments that are free of predatory crime, especially interpersonal violence.

In contrast to formally or externally induced actions (for example, a police crackdown), we focus on the effectiveness of informal mechanisms by which residents themselves achieve public order. Examples of informal social control include the monitoring of spontaneous play groups among children, a willingness to intervene to prevent acts such as truancy and street corner “hanging” by teenage peer groups, and the confrontation of persons who are exploiting or disturbing public space. Even among adults, violence regularly arises in public disputes, in the context of illegal markets (for example, prostitution and drugs), and in the company of peers. The capacity of residents to control group-level processes and visible signs of social disorder is thus a key mechanism influencing opportunities for interpersonal crime in a neighborhood.

Informal social control also generalizes to broader issues of import to the well-being of neighborhoods. In particular, the differential ability of communities to extract resources and respond to cuts in public services (such as police patrols, fire stations, garbage collection, and housing code enforcement) looms large when we consider the known link between public signs of disorder (such as vacant housing, burned-out buildings, vandalism, and litter) and more serious crime.

Thus conceived, neighborhoods differentially activate informal social control. It is for this reason that we see an analogy between individual efficacy and neighborhood efficacy: both are activated processes that seek to achieve an intended effect. At the neighborhood level, however, the willingness of local residents to intervene for the common good depends in large part on conditions of mutual trust and solidarity among neighbors. Indeed, one is unlikely to intervene in a neighborhood context in which the rules are unclear and people mistrust or fear one another. It follows that socially cohesive neighborhoods will prove the most fertile contexts for the realization of informal social control. In sum, it is the linkage of mutual trust and the willingness to intervene for the common good that defines the neighborhood context of collective efficacy. Just as individuals vary in their capacity for efficacious action, so too do neighborhoods vary in their capacity to achieve common goals. And just as individual self-efficacy is situated rather than global (one has self-efficacy relative to a particular task or type of task), in this paper we view

neighborhood efficacy as existing relative to the tasks of supervising children and maintaining public order. It follows that the collective efficacy of residents is a critical means by which urban neighborhoods inhibit the occurrence of personal violence, without regard to the demographic composition of the population.

---

* Excerpted with permission from Robert J. Sampson, Stephen W. Raudenbush, and Felton Earls, "Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy," *Science*, 227, 15 August 1997. Copyright © 1997 by the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

What Influences Collective Efficacy?

As with individual efficacy, collective efficacy does not exist in a vacuum. It is embedded in structural contexts and a wider political economy that stratifies places of residence by key social characteristics. Consider the destabilizing potential of rapid population change on neighborhood social organization. A high rate of residential mobility, especially in areas of decreasing population, fosters institutional disruption and weakened social controls over collective life. A major reason is that the formation of social ties takes time. Financial investment also provides homeowners with a vested interest in supporting the commonweal of neighborhood life. We thus hypothesize that residential tenure and homeownership promote collective efforts to maintain social control.

Consider next patterns of resource distribution and racial segregation in the United States. Recent decades have witnessed an increasing geographical concentration of lower income residents, especially minority groups and female-headed families. This neighborhood concentration stems in part from macroeconomic changes related to the deindustrialization of central cities, along with the out-migration of middle-class residents. In addition, the greater the race and class segregation in a metropolitan area, the smaller the number of neighborhoods absorbing economic shocks and the more severe the resulting concentration of poverty will be. Economic stratification by race and place thus fuels the neighborhood concentration of cumulative forms of disadvantage, intensifying the social isolation of lower income, minority, and single-parent residents from key resources supporting collective social control.

Perhaps more salient is the influence of racial and economic exclusion on perceived powerlessness. Social science research has demonstrated, at the individual level, the direct role of SES in promoting a sense of control, efficacy, and even biological health itself. An analogous process may work at the community level. The alienation, exploitation, and dependency wrought by resource deprivation act as a centrifugal force that stymies collective efficacy. Even if personal ties are strong in areas of concentrated disadvantage, they may be weakly tethered to collective actions.

We therefore test the hypothesis that concentrated disadvantage decreases and residential stability increases collective efficacy. In turn, we assess whether collective efficacy explains the association of neighborhood disadvantage and residential instability with rates of interpersonal violence. It is our hypothesis that collective efficacy mediates a substantial portion of the effects of neighborhood stratification.

Research Design

This article examines data from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN). Applying a spatial definition of neighborhood—a collection of people and institutions occupying a subsection of a larger community—we combined 847 census tracts in the city of Chicago to create 343 "neighborhood clusters" (NCs).

The overriding consideration in formation of NCs was that they should be as ecologically meaningful as possible, composed of geographically contiguous census tracts, and internally homogeneous on key census indicators. We settled on an ecological unit of about 8,000 people, which is smaller than the 77 established community areas in Chicago (the average size is almost 40,000 people) but large enough to approximate local neighborhoods. Geographic boundaries (for example, railroad tracks, parks, and freeways) and knowledge of Chicago's neighborhoods guided this process.

The extensive racial, ethnic, and social-class diversity of Chicago's population was a major criterion in its selection as a research site. At present, whites, blacks, and Latinos each represent about a third of the city's population. Although there are no low-SES white neighborhoods and no high-SES Latino neighborhoods, there are black neighborhoods in all three cells of SES, and many heterogeneous neighborhoods vary in SES....

To gain a complete picture of the city's neighborhoods, 8,782 Chicago residents representing all 343 NCs were interviewed in their homes as part of the community survey (CS). The CS was designed to yield a representative sample of households within each NC, with sample sizes large enough to create reliable NC measures. Henceforth, we refer to NCs as "neighborhoods," keeping in mind that other operational definitions might have been used.

Measure of Collective Efficacy

"Informal social control" was represented by a five-item Likert-type scale. Residents were asked about the likelihood ("Would you say it is very likely, likely, neither likely nor unlikely, unlikely, or very unlikely?") that their neighbors could be counted on to intervene in various ways if (i) children were skipping school and hanging out on a street corner, (ii) children were spray-painting graffiti on a local building, (iii) children were showing disrespect to an adult, (iv) a fight broke out in front of their house, and (v) the fire station closest to their home was threatened with budget cuts. "Social cohesion and trust" were also represented by five conceptually related items. Respondents were asked how strongly they agreed (on a five-point scale) that "people around here are willing to help their neighbors," "this is a close-knit neighborhood," "people in this neighborhood generally don't get along with each other," and "people in this neighborhood do not share the same values" (the last two statements were reverse coded).

Responses to the five-point Likert scales were aggregated to the neighborhood level as initial measures. Social cohesion and informal social control were closely associated across neighborhoods ($r = 0.80$, $P < .001$), which suggests that the two measures were tapping aspects of the same latent construct. Because we also expected that the willingness and intention to intervene on behalf of the neighborhood would be enhanced under conditions of mutual trust and cohesion, we combined the two scales into a summary measure labeled collective efficacy....

Discussion and Implications

The results imply that collective efficacy is an important construct that can be measured reliably at the neighborhood level by means of survey research strategies. In the past, sample surveys have primarily considered individual-level relations. However, surveys that merge a cluster sample design with questions tapping collective properties lend themselves to the additional consideration of neighborhood phenomena.

Together, three dimensions of neighborhood stratification—concentrated disadvantage, immigration concentration, and residential stability—explained 70% of the neighborhood variation in collective efficacy. Collective efficacy in turn mediated a substantial portion of the association of residential stability and disadvantage with multiple measures of violence, which is consistent with a major theme in neighborhood theories of social organization.

After adjustment for measurement error, individual differences in neighborhood composition, prior violence, and other potentially confounding social processes, the combined measure of informal social control and cohesion and trust remained a robust predictor of lower rates of violence.

There are, however, several limitations of the present study. Despite the use of decennial census data and prior crime as lagged predictors, the basic analysis was cross-sectional in design; causal effects were not proven. Indicators of informal control and social cohesion were not observed directly but rather inferred from informant reports. Beyond the scope of the present study, other dimensions of neighborhood efficacy (such as political ties) may be important, too. Our analysis was limited also to one city and did not go beyond its official boundaries into a wider region. Finally, the image of local residents working collectively to solve their own problems is not the whole picture. As shown, what happens within neighborhoods is in part shaped by socioeconomic and housing factors linked to the wider political economy. In addition to encouraging communities to mobilize against violence through “self-help” strategies of informal social control, perhaps reinforced by partnerships with agencies of formal social control (community policing), strategies to address the social and ecological changes that beset many inner-city communities need to be considered. Recognizing that collective efficacy matters does not imply that inequalities at the neighborhood level can be neglected.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the concept of collective efficacy differ from the concept of social disorganization?
2. Think back to when you were growing up. Was the level of collective efficacy high or low in your neighborhood? Can you give examples of when collective efficacy was or was not activated to deal with public disorder? How might collective efficacy apply to crime on college campuses, including residence halls?
3. Collective efficacy involves informal social control and mutual trust. Why do you think that these two social conditions are so closely related? Why would residents be more willing to help neighbors exercise informal social control if they trusted one another?
4. What are the policy implications of collective efficacy? What might Sampson and his colleagues say would be some key ways to increase collective efficacy and reduce crime rates in a community? Given their perspective, what type of policing or community corrections might Sampson et al. endorse?

6.
Legal Cynicism and Crime*

David S. Kirk

Andrew V. Papachristos

Kirk and Papachristos (2011) present a legal cynicism theory that extends earlier work in the Chicago school tradition, including Shaw and McKay's (1942) social disorganization theory and Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls's (1997) collective efficacy theory. Kirk and Papachristos posit that both structural and cultural conditions within neighborhoods influence rates of crime, and they emphasize the role of the cultural concept of legal cynicism in particular. They define legal cynicism as a cultural frame "through which individuals interpret the functioning and viability of the law and its agents" (Kirk and Papachristos, 2011: 1197) More specifically, legal cynicism refers to a view among citizens that the police are illegitimate, nonresponsive to residents' needs and calls for assistance, and unable to adequately provide public safety. Kirk and Papachristos suggest that legal cynicism has two major sources: neighborhood-level structural disadvantage and neighborhood-wide interactions with police and the law. First, structural disadvantage breeds a general sentiment among neighborhood residents that "the dominant societal institutions (of which the police and the justice system are emblematic) will offer them little in the way of security, either economic or personal" (Kirk and Papachristos, 2011: 1198). This general sentiment also emerges when residents of a community commonly experience police harassment, police use of force, or police unwillingness to file incident reports when called upon. Kirk and Papachristos stress that legal cynicism is the collective view of law that emerges from social interaction and that it exists independent of individual views of law (see also Kirk and Papachristos, 2015). Though other researchers study individual differences in legal cynicism (e.g., Gifford and Reisig, 2019; Nivette et al., 2015), variable views of law across individuals are typically discussed through the theoretical concepts of "procedural justice" and "perceived police legitimacy" (see Part X and Chapter 35).

Beyond theorizing about the roots of legal cynicism in neighborhood conditions and experiences, Kirk and Papachristos also theorize about the consequences of legal cynicism. They suggest that legal cynicism acts to constrain the perceived available strategies for resolving disputes. In particular, legal cynicism increases the likelihood that residents will take the law into their own hands in order to address grievances, thus increasing rates of violence. Kirk and Papachristos contend that the use of violence to resolve disputes is not the result of internalized values defining violence as favorable action. Rather, it is representative of appropriate action within the cultural frame of legal cynicism—a frame in which reliance upon police is considered unviable.

Kirk and Papachristos (2011) examine empirically the theorized antecedents and effects of legal cynicism through analysis of data on 343 Chicago neighborhoods. They find support for the posited causes and consequence of legal cynicism. Results from their research indicated that neighborhood structural characteristics, including concentrated disadvantage and residential mobility, were positively related to legal cynicism (see also Sampson and Bartusch, 1998). The results also showed that legal cynicism, in turn, was positively related to neighborhood violence. Importantly, legal cynicism affected neighborhood violence even when controlling for residents' attitudes about use of violence. In fact, residents' attitudes regarding the appropriateness of violence were unrelated to

neighborhood homicide rates. This finding reinforced Kirk and Papachristos's view that legal cynicism is a collective view that emerges from social interaction among residents and is independent of individual values.

Kirk and Papachristos's (2011) analysis also showed that the effect of legal cynicism on neighborhood rates of violence is reduced, though still significant, once collective efficacy is controlled. This finding suggests that legal cynicism affects community crime in two ways: (1) legal cynicism directly leads to higher levels of community violence; and (2) legal cynicism indirectly leads to community violence, working through collective efficacy. The indirect effect of legal cynicism makes sense in that "negative cultural frames toward the law deter neighborhood residents from collectively working to control crime" (Kirk and Papachristos, 2011 : 1222). As such, while legal cynicism has been shown to be a cultural frame distinct from collective efficacy, it has also been suggested that it (negatively) affects collective efficacy and should potentially be integrated more fully with collective efficacy theory.

References

Gifford, Faith E. and Michael D. Reisig. 2019. "A Multidimensional Model of Legal Cynicism." *Law and Human Behavior* **43**: 383–396.

Kirk, David S. and Andrew V. Papachristos. 2011. "Cultural Mechanisms and the Persistence of Neighborhood Violence." *American Journal of Sociology* **116**: 1190–1233.

____. 2015. "Concentrated Disadvantage, the Persistence of Legal Cynicism, and Crime: Revisiting the Conception of 'Culture' in Criminology." In Francis T. Cullen, Pamela Wilcox, Robert J. Sampson, and Brendan D. Dooley (eds.), *Challenging Criminological Theory: The Legacy of Ruth Rosner Kornhauser. Advances in Criminological Theory,* Volume **19**, pp. 259–274. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Nivette, Amy E., Manuel Eisner, Tina Malti, and Denis Ribeaud. 2015. "The Social and Developmental Antecedents of Legal Cynicism." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **52**: 270–298.

Sampson, Robert J. and Dawn Jeglum Bartusch. 1998. "Legal Cynicism and (Subcultural?) Tolerance of Deviance: The Neighborhood Context of Social Differences." *Law and Society Review* **32**: 777–804.

Sampson, Robert J., Stephen W. Raudenbush, and Felton J. Earls. 1997. "Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy." *Science* **277** (August 15): 918–924.

Shaw, Clifford R. and Henry D. McKay. 1942. *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Most residents of socially disadvantaged neighborhoods believe in the substance of the law and express little tolerance for violence and crime (Sampson and Bartusch 1998), yet many still engage in violations of the law despite these beliefs.

How, then, does one explain this coexistence of law-abiding beliefs and law-violating behaviors? For the most part, neighborhood research over the past 20 years has made few attempts to answer this question—or even to ask it—largely because of the failure to incorporate contemporary notions of culture in explanations for behavior. This neglect of cultural explanations is puzzling because a concern with culture was once core to theorizing in urban sociology. In particular, classic social disorganization theory considered cultural transmission an essential mechanism in the persistence of delinquency in disorganized neighborhoods (Park [1925] 1967; Shaw and McKay 1942). While in recent years research on neighborhood effects has done much to advance our understanding of the social-interactional and structural mechanisms of social behaviors (e.g., collective efficacy and concentrated poverty), only a handful of studies, mainly ethnographies, consider the role of culture in explanations for crime or in the study of neighborhood effects more broadly. This study aims to address this research shortfall by injecting a

cultural dimension found within the ethnographic tradition into the quantitative study of neighborhood effects. We argue that above and beyond social structural conditions such as poverty and structural disadvantage, neighborhood levels of violence can be explained by the presence of a specific cultural frame—legal cynicism.

Legal cynicism refers to a cultural orientation in which the law and the agents of its enforcement, such as the police and courts, are viewed as illegitimate, unresponsive, and ill equipped to ensure public safety. Legal cynicism resolves the aforementioned paradox—while individuals may believe in the substance of the law, antagonism toward and mistrust of the agents of the law may propel some individuals toward violence simply because they feel they cannot rely upon the police to help them resolve grievances. Under such conditions, violence can serve as an additional form of problem-solving behavior in one's cultural repertoire (Hannerz 1969; Black 1983), augmenting but not necessarily replacing other types of problem-solving behaviors such as calling the police….

---

* From: Kirk, David S., and Andrew V. Papachristos. 2011. "Cultural Mechanisms and the Persistence of Neighborhood Violence." *American Journal of Sociology* 116: 1190–1233; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

From Culture in Values to Cultural Frames

While little recent theorizing has been directed toward the culture-crime nexus, cultural explanations of crime do have a long tradition in sociology. One prominent cultural explanation, generally thought of as the "culture of deviance" model, explains differential levels of violence as the byproduct of a unique lower-class subculture whose main tenets diverge from or come into conflict with the values of mainstream society (Sellin 1938; Cohen 1955; Miller 1958; Lewis 1966; Wolfgang and Ferracuti 1967). This approach conceives of culture as something deep inside individuals and social groups—a bundle of norms, beliefs, attitudes, and values that provide a worldview and, more importantly as far as crime is concerned, a motive for action (e.g., Parsons 1951). From this perspective, deviance is conformity, albeit conformity to a set of values that diverge from mainstream society (Sellin 1938).

A softer version of the culture of deviance argument is found in Shaw and McKay's (1942) classic social disorganization model, although the cultural mechanism affecting behavior is still values. For Shaw and McKay (1942), the persistence of delinquency in the same neighborhoods despite population turnover and ethnic succession results from both structural conditions (i.e., economic status, population heterogeneity, and residential mobility) and a process of cultural transmission whereby the character of a community is passed on to subsequent neighborhood inhabitants. Shaw and McKay's argument follows directly from Robert Park ([1925] 1967, p. 5), who argued, "In the course of time every section and quarter of the city takes on something of the character and qualities of its inhabitants. Each separate part of the city is inevitably stained with the peculiar sentiments of its population." As the character of a community persists and is transmitted, so too does the level of delinquency persist. In particular, youth in high-delinquency neighborhoods are more likely to encounter differential systems of values, such as those touted by youth gangs, which thrive because weakened social institutions cannot fend them off.

Of course there are very good reasons why the recent resurgence of neighborhood effects studies has generally neglected the role of culture despite the theoretical groundwork laid by Shaw and McKay and earlier work in urban sociology. In particular, exploring a cultural explanation for inner-city problems could be misconstrued as favoring a "culture of poverty" interpretation of behavior. Relatedly, empirical research has largely disproved the existence of a unique lower-class culture (Kornhauser 1978). Members of all classes, including those living in impoverished neighborhood conditions, share uniform opinions of crime and subscribe to so-called middle-class values (Short and Strodtbeck 1965; Liebow 1967; Suttles 1968; Hannerz 1969). Even if residents of disadvantaged neighborhoods become socially isolated as a result of middle-class flight (Wilson 1987), it does not mean that they become culturally isolated and embedded in an oppositional culture (Harding 2007). In fact, research reveals that residents of disadvantaged neighborhoods are no more likely to tolerate violence than are residents of advantaged neighborhoods (Sampson and Bartusch 1998, p. 796).

Why, then, do crime and violence proliferate in certain areas when such courses of action are not valued? We suggest that the answer to this question lies in a revised conceptualization of culture that views culture not as values but as a repertoire of tools that ultimately serve as a guide for action (Hannerz 1969; Swidler 1986)....

In this study, we ... conceive of culture as a tool kit for action, and focus on one particular element of the tool kit that has bearing on action, namely, cultural frames. The notion of cultural frames can be traced to the work of ErvingGoffman (1974). For Goffman, cultural frames provide meaning to situations and contexts; in other words, individuals' perceptions of the world are filtered through a particular frame. Thus, the objective world may be different from the world an individual subjectively perceives, and cultural frames serve to simplify the complexity of

the objective world by highlighting certain elements of reality while excluding others (Lamont and Small 2008). In turn, cultural frames provide a guide to action in a given situation. Quite simply, how people act depends on how they cognitively perceive of themselves and the world in which they live….

The present study is concerned with a specific cultural frame—legal cynicism—and how it relates to neighborhood levels of violence. We are interested in how individuals frame the legitimacy of the law and the way illegitimacy constrains individuals' options for resolving conflicts. Cynicism can be used to understand why some individuals use violence to resolve disputes while others do not, and also to understand why some neighborhoods have more violence than others….

Legal Cynicism

Legal cynicism is a frame through which individuals interpret the functioning and viability of the law and its agents, especially law enforcement. When the law is perceived to be just, legitimate, and responsive, then individuals are more likely to cooperate and comply with the law. Therefore, it is vital to understand what influences perceptions of the law as well as the consequences of cynicism toward the law....

We suggest [that] legal cynicism is the product of two related influences: (1) neighborhood structural conditions and (2) neighborhood variation in police practices and resident interaction with the police....

Most relevant for our argument, Sampson and Bartusch (1998), using the same survey data that we employ in our study, find that neighborhood variation in cynicism toward the law is not simply the product of resident compositional differences across neighborhoods; rather, legal cynicism is a product of neighborhood disadvantage. To the extent that neighborhood disadvantage inhibits the upward mobility of residents because of social isolation or restricted opportunities, such disadvantage breeds cynicism toward societal institutions. Sampson and Bartusch (1998, p. 801) conclude: "Perhaps we should not be surprised that those most exposed to the numbing reality of pervasive segregation and economic subjugation become cynical about human nature and legal systems of justice—even as they personally condemn acts of deviance and violence."

A second root source of legal cynicism is the actions of the criminal justice system, particularly law enforcement. While perceptions of the law will not exactly mirror objective reality, they do tend to be correlated. Matza (1964, p. 101) contends that cynical views toward the law are produced by seemingly contradictory factors: an approval of the substance of criminal law, yet an antagonism directed at the agents of the law. This antagonism and the consequent cynicism are the product of police conduct, particularly harassing behavior, and insufficient and ineffective crime control (Kubrin and Weitzer 2003). In short, the way justice is administered influences legal cynicism.

While the law manifests itself in numerous ways in our everyday lives, perhaps the most visible and palpable symbol of the law is the police. A growing body of literature demonstrates that police behavior varies across neighborhood context and that the police have wide discretion to carry out their functions (see Black and Reiss [1970] for an early examination of police discretion). For instance, Smith (1986) finds that police are less likely to file incident reports following a crime in high-crime neighborhoods than in low-crime neighborhoods. In addition, Smith finds that police are more likely to use coercive authority (i.e., to use or threaten to use force against suspects) in nonwhite and racially mixed neighborhoods, relative to predominately white neighborhoods. More recently, Terrill and Reisig (2003) find that police contact is significantly more likely to result in police use of force in disadvantaged neighborhoods, and Kane (2005) finds that police misconduct is dramatically more prevalent in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

There are numerous potential reasons underlying the neighborhood variation in policing, many of which contend that policing itself is a product of the structural conditions of neighborhoods (Kirk and Matsuda 2010).... For our purposes of understanding legal cynicism, the root causes of neighborhood variation in police behavior are not as consequential as the possibility that variation in policing may, in part, account for differentials in legal cynicism across neighborhoods.

Empirically, research validates the argument that legal cynicism is a product of direct experience with the justice system. For instance, respondents from Brunson's (2007) study of youth experiences with the police mentioned

frequent personal instances of police harassment and mistreatment as well as misconduct and brutality. In turn, these experiences cultivated negative perceptions of the police. Likewise, Carr, Napolitano, and Keating (2007) observe that youths in disadvantaged neighborhoods often develop a negative disposition toward the police that is a product of police harassment and repeated victimizations. Anderson (1999) finds that many residents of disadvantaged areas are afraid to even report crimes for fear that the police, even if they show up, might harass them or reveal their identities to the perpetrators of the crime. Such views are molded by past experiences with the law, and the realization that any protection the police can provide will be fleeting at best.

Transmitting Legal Cynicism

While we argue that legal cynicism has roots in neighborhood structural conditions and direct interactions with law enforcement, it is important to emphasize that culture is relational, not merely adaptive (Hannerz 1969). Individuals acquire culture relationally, through their interactions in social networks. Direct experiences with harassing police may influence an individual's cynicism, but this cynicism becomes cultural through social interaction. In this sense, individuals' own experiential-based perception of the law becomes solidified through a collective process whereby residents develop a shared meaning of the behavior of the law and the viability of the law to ensure their safety....

In sum, residents of a neighborhood share a common existence and are subject to the same ecological constraints. From this shared existence, as well as direct and vicarious experiences with the police, emerges a culture. Resident experiences, with the police and with structural conditions, coalesce to produce a cultural frame. To be clear, we are not arguing that legal cynicism among neighborhood residents is static; rather, it is shaped and reshaped by neighborhood conditions and direct and vicarious experiences with agents of the law. And while we do not deny that individuals within the same neighborhood will vary in their extent of cynicism, our core argument is that perceptions of the law and legal institutions are collective....

The Consequences of Legal Cynicism

We suggest that the consequence is constraint—that is, cynicism constrains choices for resolving grievances and protecting oneself because individuals are more likely to presume that the law is unavailable or unresponsive to their needs. In the face of such constraints, individuals may choose to engage in their own brand of social control because they cannot rely upon the law to assist them.

To illustrate the mechanism, take, for example, a situation where a neighborhood resident is faced with a threat of violent victimization. Individuals have a range of potential strategies of action for handling the situation: they can avoid violent individuals and hazardous places, seek protection from older neighborhood peers, travel in groups to dangerous locations, call the police for protection, or resort to violence to resolve a conflict. These strategies are dependent upon each other—legally cynical individuals may view reliance on the police as an ineffective strategy for handling the conflict, thus making it more likely that individuals will solve the dispute through violence. To be clear, cynicism toward the law does not directly cause neighborhood violence yet makes it more likely because mistrust of the agents of the law opens up the possibility that individuals will resort to illegal violence to redress a problem instead of abiding by the letter of the law.... Legal cynicism constrains choices, making it more likely that individuals will undertake "extraordinary measures" of self-help.

Conceptual Model

Figure 6.1 translates the foregoing arguments into a conceptual model. We contend that negative interactions with the police and other institutions of the law as well as neighborhood structural conditions such as concentrated poverty lead to legal cynicism. These conditions structure how individuals perceive the functioning and relevance of the law. Through communication and interaction, experiences with the law and neighborhood conditions coalesce so residents form a shared perception of how the police will operate in a given context. In turn, legal cynicism fosters violence by constraining the available strategies to resolve disputes and ensure personal safety. The perceived inadequacy or illegitimacy of formal institutions of social control means that individuals may no longer regard the use of formal control institutions as an option to mediate their grievances. In other words, calling the police will not solve their problems or remedy disputes and victimizations (Carr et al. 2007). In the face of such a constraint, the use of violence as a form of self-help or social control may become a situational response to legal cynicism (Black 1983; see also Anderson 1999; Jacobs and Wright 2006). When the law is unavailable—or when the law is perceived to be unavailable—individuals may choose to disperse social control by their own means, thus increasing the probability of violence.

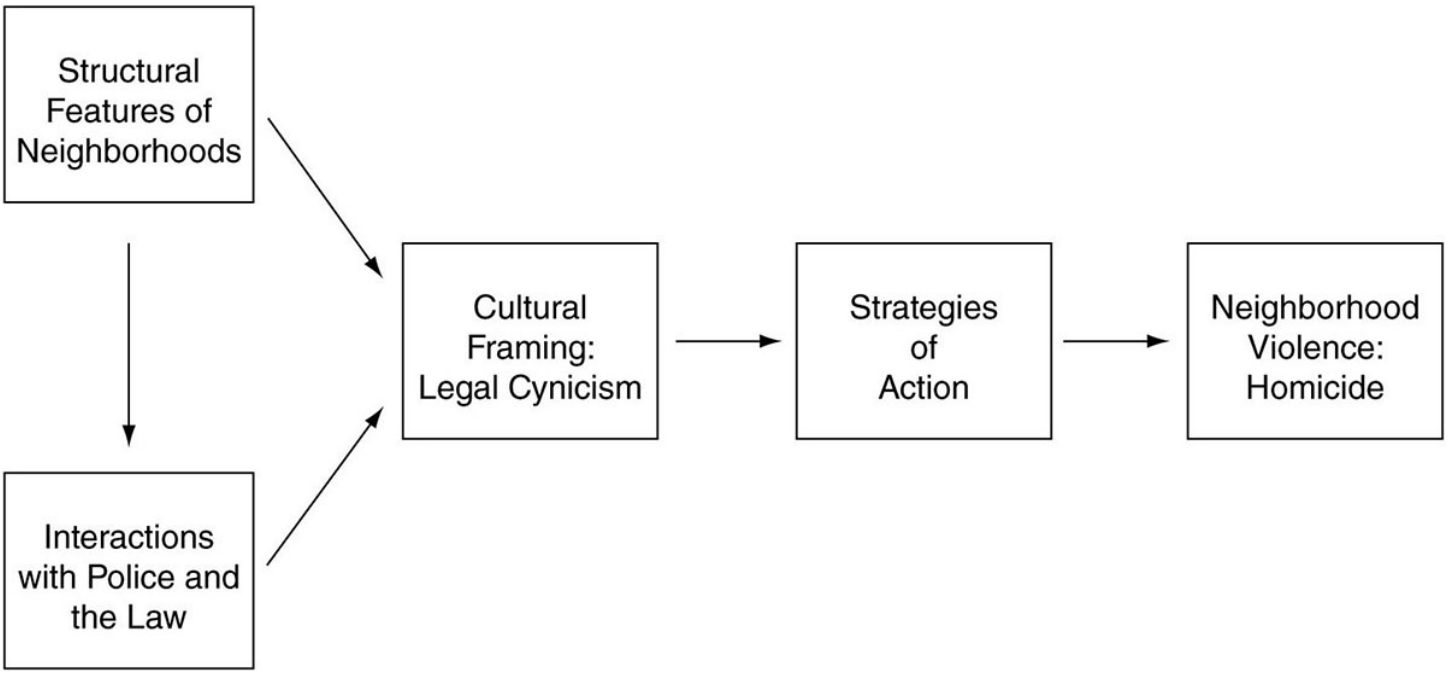

Structural Features of Neighborhoods
Interactions with Police and the Law
Cultural Framing: Legal Cynicism
Strategies of Action
Neighborhood Violence: Homicide

FIGURE 6.1 A Conceptual Model of Cultural Adaptation and Constraint on Action

In the present study, we focus on a single type of violent act—murder. While the act of murder is, at its core, a dyadic event, our focus is on determining whether differentials in homicide across neighborhoods are associated with neighborhood differences in aggregate levels of legal cynicism. While it is an important question to consider whether a cynical individual is more likely to kill, our goal is to examine the ecology of homicide. Because of differences in structural conditions, the behavior of the law, and the consequent cultural transmission across neighborhoods, we have every reason to assume that legal cynicism does vary across neighborhoods. Given this reality, we seek to determine whether legal cynicism explains why some neighborhoods have drastically more homicides than others.

Data and Research Design

Data used in this study come from three sources: the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN), the Chicago Police Department, and the U.S. census. The PHDCN is an interdisciplinary project that focuses on understanding the causes of juvenile delinquency, adult crime, and violence, among other outcomes. Indicators of neighborhood cultural and social mechanisms come from the 1994–95 PHDCN Community Survey. Survey questions include items about legal cynicism, tolerance of deviance, and the social organization of neighborhoods, including an emphasis on the cohesiveness of ties among neighborhood residents and their willingness to engage in social control (i.e., collective efficacy). For the purposes of the PHDCN, neighborhood boundaries were operationally defined by combining all of the census tracts in Chicago into 343 neighborhood clusters, constructed to be "as ecologically meaningful as possible, composed of geographically contiguous census tracts, and internally homogeneous on key census indicators" (Sampson et al. 1997, p. 919). These census indicators include socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, housing density, and family structure. An average of 8,000 residents comprises each of the 343 neighborhood clusters. The Community Survey yielded a probability sample of 8,782 Chicago residents situated within the 343 neighborhood clusters. Our unit of analysis is the neighborhood cluster defined in the PHDCN data.

Variables

Legal cynicism. We conceptualize legal cynicism as a frame through which individuals interpret the functioning and usefulness of the law and its agents. To measure legal cynicism, we combine three items from the PHDCN Community Survey. Respondents of the survey were asked the extent to which they agree with the following: (1) laws are made to be broken, (2) the police are not doing a good job in preventing crime in this neighborhood, and (3) the police are not able to maintain order on the streets and sidewalks in the neighborhood. Details of our scaling strategy are presented below.

Tolerance of deviance. This measure, which has previously been developed by Sampson and Bartusch (1998), serves as an indicator of residents' views about the morality of engaging in certain forms of deviant behavior, including violence. Four items are used to construct the scale, which all concern "how wrong" it is for a 13-year-old to engage in various behaviors: (1) smoke cigarettes, (2) use marijuana, (3) drink alcohol, and (4) get into fistfights. Higher scores equate to higher levels of tolerance for these behaviors (i.e., belief that these behaviors are not wrong).

Collective efficacy. Our measure of collective efficacy is identical to the scale developed by Sampson et al. (1997) and represents a combined measure of neighborhood social control and social cohesion and trust. Neighborhood social control refers to the willingness of residents to intervene in the following situations: (1) children were skipping school and hanging out on a street corner, (2) children were spray painting graffiti on a local building, (3) children were showing disrespect to an adult, (4) a fight broke out, and (5) the fire station closest to the respondent's home was threatened with budget cuts. The measure of social cohesion and trust is based on the level of respondent agreement to the following survey statements: (1) people around here are willing to help their neighbors, (2) people in this neighborhood can be trusted, (3) people in this neighborhood generally get along with each other, (4) this is a close-knit neighborhood, and (5) people in this neighborhood share the same values.

Following the measurement strategy of Sampson et al. (1997), we construct the legal cynicism, tolerance of deviance, and collective efficacy scales, respectively, via a multilevel item-response model using HLM (hierarchical linear and nonlinear modeling). In this model, item responses to each of the survey questions are nested within a respondent, and respondents are nested within neighborhoods. From this item-response model, we output a neighborhood specific empirical Bayes (EB) residual to use as our scale. These scales represent the average level of legal cynicism, tolerance of deviance, and collective efficacy across residents of each given neighborhood.

Homicide. To assess the consequences of legal cynicism for neighborhood violence, we use rates of homicide as a dependent variable. The use of homicide data in studies of violence has several advantages over the use of data on other crime types. In contrast to other forms of violence, there is a close match between known homicides and the true number of homicides. Furthermore, homicide is less susceptible to the definitional problems an investigating officer or detective may face when determining exactly which type of crime was committed.

Incident-level homicide data were obtained from the Chicago Police Department (CPD). Address information from each incident was used to geocode the location of the homicide to the corresponding PHDCN neighborhood cluster....

Discussion

The study of neighborhood effects has become a cottage industry over the past two decades, and much has been learned about the neighborhood-level social-interactional mechanisms that influence violence and other social outcomes (Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley 2002). Outside of a few noteworthy examples, however, quantitative studies of neighborhood effects have paid relatively little attention to cultural mechanisms in comparison to the usual suspects such as economic disadvantage and social capital. While structural and social-interactional factors are crucial for understanding neighborhood violence, cultural mechanisms are vital for understanding why neighborhood conditions such as disadvantage are associated with violence (i.e., because of adaptation) and for understanding why violence and other neighborhood-based outcomes may persist even as neighborhoods change structurally.

There are very good reasons why the recent resurgence of neighborhood effects studies has generally neglected the role of culture. In particular, for too long, academia conceived of culture as values despite an accumulating volume of ethnographic research that demonstrates that values become attenuated in the face of societal structural conditions, and play but a minimal role in guiding individual action. Thus, in order to explore the role of culture as a determinant of neighborhood violence, the theoretical challenge is to reorient discussions away from the "culture in values" framework and toward a more nuanced understanding of cultural mechanisms. Accordingly, this study examines the consequences of one particular cultural mechanism—legal cynicism. Legal cynicism is a cultural frame that structures the way residents perceive the legitimacy of the law, and the utility of the law as a guide for behavior.

In regards to our empirical objectives, the findings … reveal (*a*) individual-level perceptions of legal cynicism vary as a function of neighborhood conditions such as concentrated poverty and residential stability … (*b*) that homicide is unrelated to resident attitudes toward deviance and violence…. (*c*) that neighborhood rates of homicide are positively associated with legal cynicism net of structural and social factors…. and (*d*) that legal cynicism explains the unexpected (residual) change in homicide in Chicago from the early 1990s to early 2000s…. We assert that when the law is perceived to be unavailable—for example, when calling the police is not a viable option to remedy one's problems—individuals may instead resolve their grievances by their own means, which may include violence (Black 1983). In this sense, cultural frames have a constraining influence; cynicism constrains choice if individuals presume that the law is unavailable or unresponsive to their needs, thus pushing individuals to engage in their own brand of social control….

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is legal cynicism? What are its causes and its consequences?
2. What is the difference between a cultural value and a cultural frame? Do Kirk and Papachristos provide evidence in favor of one over the other regarding the concept of legal cynicism? Explain.
3. Is the level of legal cynicism in your neighborhood high or low? Can you explain how it operates to affect high or low levels of violence in your neighborhood?
4. What are the policy implications of legal cynicism theory? What types of policing or other criminal justice policy seem warranted in order to reduce legal cynicism and crime in communities?

PART III

LEARNING TO BE A CRIMINAL: DIFFERENTIAL ASSOCIATION, SUBCULTURAL, AND SOCIAL LEARNING THEORIES

Francis T. Cullen
University of Cincinnati

Robert Agnew
Emory University

Pamela Wilcox
Pennsylvania State University

The theories in this section argue that people *learn* to engage in criminal behavior, in much the same way that they learn to engage in other sorts of behavior. Certain learning theories are at the micro or individual level: They attempt to explain how individuals learn to engage in crime. Others are at the macro or group level: They attempt to explain why certain groups, like Southerners or young people, have higher rates of certain types of crime.

Micro-Level Learning Theories

While learning theories of crime have been advanced by many theorists over the years, Sutherland's theory of differential association was the first and most prominent formal statement of micro-level learning theory (see Chapter 7 in this part). Sutherland first provided a complete statement of the theory in the 1939 edition of his criminology textbook and presented the final version of the theory in the 1947 edition. The theory is presented in the form of nine propositions. In brief, it states that criminal behavior is learned in interaction with others, particularly intimate others like friends and family. Through such interaction, we learn techniques of committing crime and "definitions" (motives, drives, rationalizations, attitudes) favorable and unfavorable toward violation of the law. An individual becomes criminal "because of an excess of definitions favorable to violation of law over definitions unfavorable to violation of law." Individuals are most likely to engage in crime if they are exposed to definitions favorable to law violation (1) early in life, (2) on a relatively frequent basis, (3) over a long period of time, and (4) from sources they like and respect. Recent versions of Sutherland's textbook address some common misconceptions about and criticisms of the theory (see Sutherland et al., 1992; see also Akers, 2009; Akers et al., 2016; Kubrin et al., 2009; Matsueda, 1988, 2010; Warr, 2001).

Differential association theory has most often been used to explain delinquency among adolescents and crime among lower-class offenders, but Sutherland emphasizes that the theory is applicable to all crimes. This point is illustrated

in Chapter 8, where Sutherland uses the theory to explain white-collar crime. This chapter is from a seminal 1940 article that introduced the concept of white-collar crime into criminology. Sutherland begins his article by stating that criminologists commonly assume that crime is concentrated in the lower class, since lower-class individuals are more often arrested, convicted, and sent to prison. And criminologists have developed theories to explain why lower-class individuals are allegedly more criminal, with these theories explaining crime in terms of poverty or "the psychopathic and sociopathic conditions associated with poverty." Sutherland then goes on to argue that there is good reason to believe that crime is also quite common among "business and professional men." He describes the nature of such crime and argues that the financial loss from white-collar crime is much larger than that from the crimes of the lower class. Further, white-collar crime damages social relations, creating distrust and lowering morale in the general population.

Sutherland then argues that the extensive nature of white-collar crime challenges those theories that explain crime in terms of poverty or those factors associated with poverty. How, then, can we explain white-collar crime? Sutherland states that his theory of differential association can explain crime in all classes. White-collar crime, as well as crime in the lower class, is learned from others. In particular, "it is learned in direct or indirect association with those who already practice the behavior; and that those who learn this criminal behavior are segregated from frequent and intimate contacts with law-abiding behavior" (1940: 10–11). That is, white-collar crime is learned when individuals differentially associate with those who engage in such crime. Individuals get involved with businesses that routinely engage in white-collar crime, with these individuals then learning the techniques for committing such crimes and the "definitions" (e.g., motives, rationalizations, attitudes) favorable to such crimes.

One major criticism of differential association theory, however, is that Sutherland does not present a good description of definitions favorable and unfavorable to crime. Several theorists have tried to more precisely define the nature of these definitions. In certain cases, it has been said that individuals hold values that unconditionally approve of crime (Cohen, 1955; Topalli, 2005). In other cases, it has been claimed that individuals hold values that do not directly approve of crime but are conducive to crime: values such as seeking excitement or thrills, toughness, and the desire for quick, easy success (Agnew, 2000; Brezina and Agnew, 2018; Matza and Sykes, 1961; Miller, 1958; Mullins, 2006; Wilkinson, 2003). More commonly, however, it is argued that individuals hold beliefs that approve of, justify, or excuse crime *in certain situations* (see Agnew, 2000; Akers, 2009; Akers and Sellers, 2008; Bandura, 1990; Kubrin et al., 2009; Maruna and Copes, 2005). Sykes and Matza (1957) have written the key article in this area (see Chapter 15 in Part V). They begin their article by attacking those who claim that delinquents unconditionally approve of crime (they especially attack Cohen, whose theory of the origin of the delinquent subcultures is described in Part IV). They then present five "techniques of neutralization" that delinquents commonly use to justify or excuse their delinquency. While these techniques may be used as after-the-fact rationalizations, Sykes and Matza claim that they are also used before crime occurs and that they make crime possible by neutralizing one's belief that crime is bad. The individual essentially says that although crime in general is bad, it is justifiable or excusable in their particular case because the victim has it coming, the behavior will not really hurt anyone, and so on. (It should be noted that Sykes and Matza's theory is sometimes treated as a learning theory, since individuals often learn these justifications and excuses from others; and it is sometimes treated as a control theory, since these justifications and excuses do not positively motivate crime but rather "free" individuals to satisfy their impulses and desires in a criminal manner [see Part V of this book]).

A number of studies have examined the nature of definitions favorable to delinquency. These studies suggest that few people unconditionally approve of crime (with the exception of minor forms of crime like marijuana use and gambling; see also Topalli, 2005). More commonly, some individuals are close to amoral in their view of crime. That is, they neither approve of nor condemn crime. This amoral orientation is probably best explained in terms of social control theory, which argues that some individuals are not properly socialized (see Part V; Warner, 2003). Also,

some individuals hold values conducive to crime (as stated above, thrills or excitement, toughness, quick or easy success). Further, some individuals approve of, justify, or excuse crime *under certain conditions*. These types of individuals are more likely to engage in crime (see Agnew, 1994, 2000; Akers, 2009; Akers et al., 2016; Brezina and Agnew, 2018; Brezina et al., 2004; Erickson et al., 2020; Heimer, 1997; Kubrin et al., 2009; Maruna and Copes, 2005; Stewart and Simons, 2010).

A second criticism of differential association theory is that it fails to fully describe the process by which crime is learned. The theory simply says we learn definitions favorable (or unfavorable) to crime through our association with others. Burgess and Akers (1966) and Akers (1985, 2009) drew on behavioral and social learning theory in psychology to more fully describe the process by which individuals learn to engage in crime (see also Akers and Jennings, 2012; Akers and Jensen, 2003, 2006, 2010; Akers and Sellers, 2012; Akers et al., 2016; Bandura, 1973, 1986; Salisbury, 2013; Sellers and Winfree, 2010; Snyder et al., 2003). In brief, Akers argues that crime is learned through three processes (see Chapter 9 in this part). First, individuals learn beliefs that define crime as desirable, justifiable, or excusable in certain situations. This portion of the theory is very compatible with the emphasis of Sutherland on definitions, although Akers more precisely describes the beliefs that lead to crime. Second, individuals engage in crime because they are differentially reinforced for criminal behavior. This reinforcement may be positive, such as when one receives rewards for engaging in crime (e.g., the social approval of friends, money from a robbery); it may also be negative, such as when the commission of a crime allows one to avoid or escape from unpleasant stimuli (e.g., friends stop taunting you after you use the illicit drugs they offer). Third, individuals engage in crime because they imitate the criminal behavior of others, especially valued others whose own criminal behavior is reinforced (e.g., imitating the successful drug dealers in one's neighborhood).

Differential association and social learning theory are usually tested by examining the relationship between delinquency and association with delinquent peers. Although one may learn to engage in delinquency from both criminals and conventional people, it is felt that delinquent friends are the major source of such learning. Much data indicate that delinquents are more likely to state that their friends are delinquent. In fact, association with delinquent friends emerges as the strongest correlate of delinquency in most studies (Agnew and Brezina, 2018; Akers, 2009; Akers et al., 2016; Pratt et al., 2010; Warr, 2002, 2012). This correlation is often taken as strong evidence in support of social learning theory. A number of researchers, however, have argued that the correlation does not necessarily mean that association with delinquent friends *causes* delinquency for the reasons described by social learning theory.

Data suggest that the correlation between delinquency and association with delinquent friends is partly due to the fact that delinquents tend to select other delinquents as friends ("birds of a feather flock together"). This correlation also reflects the fact that both delinquency and association with delinquent friends are caused by many of the same third variables, such as poor parental supervision, low self-control, and residence in very poor communities. Further, recent data suggest that this correlation is partly due to the fact that delinquents often assume that their friends are more delinquent than they actually are. That is, delinquents often project their own delinquency onto their friends. Association with delinquent friends has a smaller effect on delinquency when these factors are taken into account, although it still has some effect in most studies, particularly when youth associate with gang members (Brauer and Bolen, 2015; Carson et al., 2017; Dong and Krohn, 2016; Haynie, 2009; Kim and Fletcher, 2018; Krohn, 1999; Kubrin et al., 2009; Young et al., 2014). Beyond that, the effect of association with delinquent friends on delinquency may be explained in terms of several theories. While delinquent friends contribute to the social learning of crime, they may also reduce control and increase strain (e.g., Agnew and Brezina, 2018). Associating with delinquent friends, for example, may weaken ties to family and school.

That said, there is still strong support for social learning theory. This support stems from research based on experiments, field studies, and surveys (Agnew and Brezina, 2018; Akers, 2009; Akers et al., 2016; Cochran et al., 2017; Gallupe et al., 2016; Kubrin et al., 2009; Pratt et al., 2010; Sellers and Winfree, 2010; Thornberry et al., 2003; Tittle et al., 2012; Walters, 2016; Warr, 2002, 2012). Such research finds that crime is more common among those who have been reinforced or expect reinforcement for crime. For example, it is more common among those who state that their friends and parents will react positively to their delinquency. Crime is more common among those who hold beliefs that approve of, justify, or excuse crime in certain circumstances. And crime is somewhat more common among those exposed to criminal models, although the effect of modeling is hard to distinguish from the more general effect of association with criminal others (Kubrin et al., 2009). Research on the theory continues. Most notably, recent work suggests that social and biological factors influence the impact of social learning variables on crime (e.g., Cochran et al., 2016; Simons et al., 2011; Thomas and Mccuddy, 2020). Some people, for example, are more susceptible than others to the influence of delinquent peers.

Considering the evidence as a whole, there is little doubt that Sutherland's differential association theory and the extension of that theory by Akers are among the leading explanations of crime.

Macro-Level Learning Theories

The macro-level versions of learning theory most commonly argue that there are certain groups in the United States with values that are conducive to crime or that approve of or justify crime in certain circumstances. Such values explain the higher rates of crime in these groups.

Some theorists have argued that members of the lower class or that certain segments of the lower class hold such values. Miller (1958), for example, proposes that there is a lower-class culture whose members sometimes emphasize values like trouble, toughness, smartness (the ability to outsmart or con others), and excitement. Such values are said to explain the allegedly higher rate of crime in the lower class (see Tittle and Meier, 1990). The "subculture of violence" thesis developed by Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1982) has its origins in an attempt to explain the high rate of homicide among young African American males in the inner city. They assert that in this group violence is seen as an appropriate, even expected, response to a wide range of insults and provocations. They state, for example, that

> a male is expected to defend the name and honor of his mother, the virtue of womanhood ... and to accept no derogation about his race (even from a member of his own race), his age, or his masculinity. (1982: 153)

Chapter 10 by Anderson provides a contemporary account of the subculture of violence thesis. Anderson (1994, 1999) describes the "code of the street," and argues that this code pressures African American youth in the inner city to respond to shows of disrespect with violence. (The theories of Cohen [1955] and Cloward and Ohlin [1960] also argue that certain segments of the lower class have values conducive to crime.)

Other theorists have argued that young people constitute a deviant subculture. In particular, young people are said to approve of certain minor forms of crime, like gambling and underage drinking, and to hold values that are conducive to crime—like an emphasis on thrills and excitement (this "youth subculture" is a popular subject for movies and TV shows). Still other theorists have argued that many Southerners hold values that are conducive to the use of lethal violence. Such values have been used to explain the higher rate of homicide in the South. Finally, it has been argued that executives in certain corporations approve of select forms of crime, like price fixing and consumer fraud (see Agnew, 2000; Agnew and Kaufman, 2010; Bernard et al., 2009, for brief overviews of these theories).

The origin of these deviant subcultures has been explained in several ways, including the increased differentiation of societies and the isolation of some groups—such as the inner-city poor—from mainstream cultural groups (see Agnew, 2000; Berg and Stewart, 2013; Bernard, 1990; Brezina and Agnew, 2018; Brezina et al., 2004; Curtis, 1975; Heimer, 1997; Matsueda, 2010; Nisbett and Cohen, 1996; Sampson and Wilson, 1995; Wilson, 1987). The most common explanation draws on strain theory, which is described in Part IV of this book. According to one version of this theory, individuals who are unable to achieve valued goals through legitimate channels may attempt to achieve them through illegitimate channels. In the process, they may come to justify or approve of their illegal behavior. Individuals who cannot achieve monetary success through conventional means, for example, may come to justify illegitimate means of goal achievement like theft and drug selling. A second version of strain theory argues that when individuals cannot achieve conventional goals through legitimate channels, they may substitute alternative goals that they are capable of achieving in their place. These alternative goals may sometimes involve crime. For example, individuals who cannot achieve middle-class status may reject this goal and instead define status in terms of whether one is a good fighter. Elements of these strain explanations can be found in the Anderson article (see also Curtis, 1975; the Cohen selection in Part IV), and they are prominent in the British work on youth subcultures (Agnew and Kaufman, 2010; Tanner, 1978; Young, 2009).

Surprisingly, there has not been much research on these macro-level learning theories. The few studies that have been done suggest that all groups—regardless of income, age, race, gender, or area of residence—condemn crime. There may, however, be differences in the degree to which crime is condemned. Also, groups may differ in the extent to which they hold values conducive to crime (e.g., toughness, excitement or thrills) and in the extent to which they approve of, justify, or excuse crime under varying conditions. Although several studies have been conducted in this area, their findings are often suspect due to various methodological problems—like the use of questionable measures of values. Recent evidence from observational studies and survey research, however, tentatively suggests that young people, males, certain Southerners, and possibly urban residents and lower-class people are more likely to hold certain types of values favorable to crime (for overviews and selected studies, see Berg and Stewart, 2013; Brezina et al., 2004; Cao et al., 1997; Dixon and Lizotte, 1987; Ellison, 1991; Hayes and Lee, 2005; Heimer, 1997; Heimer and De Coster, 1999; Lee et al., 2007; Luckenbill and Doyle, 1989; Markowitz and Felson, 1998; Messner, 1988; Mullins, 2006; Nisbett and Cohen, 1996; Sampson and Bartusch, 1999; Stewart and Simons, 2006, 2010; Swartz, 2010). Rural, white Southerners, for example, appear more likely to approve of violence for defensive purposes and to avenge insults against their honor. Most evidence suggests that blacks are no more likely to approve of crime than whites, with a few studies finding that whites are more likely to hold certain types of values favorable to crime. The "code of the street" described by Elijah Anderson in Chapter 10 may be more strongly related to residence in severely disadvantaged neighborhoods and exposure to a range of adverse social conditions than it is to race (see Berg et al., 2020; Berg and Stewart, 2013; Brezina et al., 2004; Mullins, 2006; Sampson and Bartusch, 1999; Stewart and Simons, 2006; Wilkinson, 2003; although see Carson and Esbensen, 2014). Data also suggest that smaller groups, like certain students within a school, gang members, and members of hate groups, often hold values that are conducive to crime or that approve of, justify, or excuse crime under certain conditions (Blazak, 2001; Felson et al., 1994; Matsueda et al., 2013).

These macro-level learning theories, then, have some limited support. It is important to emphasize, however, that most people in most groups condemn crime. The members of certain groups, however, may be somewhat more likely than the members of other groups to hold values conducive to crime (e.g., toughness) or to approve of, justify, or excuse crime under certain conditions.

Akers (2009) has recently extended macro-level learning theories of crime. In particular, his theory of "social structure and social learning" argues that group differences in crime rates are more than a function of group differences in values or beliefs conducive to crime. As described in Chapter 9, he argues that features of the larger

social environment affect crime by influencing *all* of the mechanisms by which individuals learn to engage in crime—including association with criminal others, the differential reinforcement for crime, exposure to criminal models, and the adoption of beliefs favorable to crime. Akers describes several features of the larger social environment that affect the likelihood that individuals will learn to engage in crime. Certain of these features are associated with other macro-level theories of crime, like the extent to which communities are socially disorganized (see Part II). Akers argues that individuals in disorganized communities are more likely to associate with criminal others, such as gang members, are less likely to be punished and more likely to be reinforced for crime, are more likely to be exposed to criminal models, and are more likely to learn beliefs favorable to crime. Related to this, Akers argues that one's position in the larger social environment, as indexed by sociodemographic characteristics such as age and gender, also influences all of the mechanisms by which individuals learn to engage in crime. Akers's theory, then, is much broader than most macro-level learning theories, which focus on group differences in values or beliefs regarding crime.

Akers's macro-level theory has not yet been extensively tested, but a few preliminary studies provide some support for it (see Akers, 2009; Akers and Jensen, 2003, 2006, 2010; Haynie et al., 2006; Jensen, 2007). For example, Bellair et al. (2003) found that adolescent violence is higher in communities where few residents have professional and managerial jobs. They further found that part of the reason for this is that the adolescents in such communities are less likely to be exposed to positive role models, are more likely to join delinquent peer groups, are less likely to anticipate they will be reinforced for conventional activities, and are more likely to learn values conducive to crime. Akers's work, then, holds some promise for substantially expanding the scope of macro-level learning theories.

References

Agnew, Robert. 1994. “The Techniques of Neutralization and Violence.” *Criminology* **32**: 555–580.

____. 2000. “Sources of Criminality: Strain and Subcultural Theories.” In Joseph F. Sheley (ed.), *Criminology: A Contemporary Handbook*, 2nd edition, pp. 349–371. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Agnew, Robert and Timothy Brezina. 2018. *Juvenile Delinquency: Causes and Control*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Agnew, Robert and Joanne M. Kaufman, eds. 2010. *Anomie, Strain, and Subcultural Theories of Crime*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate.

Akers, Ronald L. 1985. *Deviant Behavior: A Social Learning Approach*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

____. 2009. *Social Learning and Social Structure: A General Theory of Crime and Deviance*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Akers, Ronald L. and Wesley G. Jennings. 2012. “The Social Learning of Crime and Deviance.” In Marvin D. Krohn, Alan J. Lizotte, and Gina Penly Hall (eds.), *Handbook on Crime and Deviance*, pp. 103–120. New York: Springer.

Akers, Ronald L. and Gary F. Jensen, eds. 2003. *Social Learning Theory and the Explanation of Crime: A Guide for the New Century—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **11**. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

____ 2006. “The Empirical Status of Social Learning Theory of Crime and Deviance: Past, Present, and Future.” In Francis T. Cullen, John Paul Wright, and Kristie R. Belvins (eds.), *Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **15**, pp. 37–76. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

____. 2010. “Social Learning Theory: Process and Structure in Criminal and Deviant Behavior.” In Eugene McLaughlin and Tim Newburn (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 56–71. London: Sage.

Akers, Ronald L. and Christine S. Sellers. 2008. *Criminological Theories*, 5th edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

____. 2012. “Social Learning Theory.” In Barry C. Feld and Donna M. Bishop (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Juvenile Crime and Juvenile Justice*, pp. 307–335. New York: Oxford University Press.

Akers, Ronald L., Christine S. Sellers, and Wesley G. Jennings. 2016. *Criminological Theories*. 7th edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

Anderson, Elijah. 1994. “The Code of the Streets.” *Atlantic Monthly* **273** (May): 81–94.

____. 1999. *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the City*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Bandura, Albert. 1973. *Aggression: A Social Learning Analysis*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

____. 1986. *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

____. 1990. “Selective Activation and Disengagement of Moral Control.” *Journal of Social Issues* **46**: 27–46.

Bellair, Paul E., Vincent J. Roscigno, and Marcia B. Velez. 2003. “Occupational Structure, Social Learning, and Adolescent Violence.” In Ronald L. Akers and Gary F. Jensen (eds.), *Social Learning Theory and the Explanation of Crime: A Guide for the New Century—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **11**, pp. 197–225. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Berg, Mark T., Man-Kit Lei, and Ronald L. Simons. 2020. “Socially Demoralizing Environments and the Development of the Street Code from Childhood to Emerging Adulthood.” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **36**: 207–233.

Berg, Mark T. and Eric A. Stewart. 2013. “Street Culture and Crime.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 370–388. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bernard, Thomas J. 1990. “Angry Aggression Among the ‘Truly Disadvantaged.’” *Criminology* **28**: 73–96.

Bernard, Thomas J., Jeffrey B. Snipes, and Alexander L. Gerould. 2009. *Vold’s Theoretical Criminology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Blazak, Randy. 2001. “White Boys to Terrorist Men.” *American Behavioral Scientist* **44**: 982–1000.

Brauer, Jonathan R. and Jonathan D. Bolen. 2015. “Learning Theories of Crime.” In Kevin M. Beaver, J. C. Barnes, and Brian B. Boutwell (eds.), *The Nurture Versus Biosocial Debate in Criminology*, pp. 110–124. Los Angeles: Sage.

Brezina, Timothy and Robert Agnew. 2018. “Juvenile Delinquency and Subterranean Values Revisited.” In Thomas G. Blomberg, Francis T. Cullen, Christopher Carlson, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (eds.), *Delinquency and Drift Revisited—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **21**, pp. 73–98. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Brezina, Timothy, Robert Agnew, Francis T. Cullen, and John Paul Wright. 2004. “The Code of the Street.” *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* **2**: 303–328.

Burgess, Robert L. and Ronald L. Akers. 1966. “A Differential Association-Reinforcement Theory of Criminal Behavior.” *Social Problems* **14**: 128–147.

Cao, Liqun, Anthony Adams, and Vickie J. Jensen. 1997. “A Test of the Black Subculture of Violence Thesis: A Research Note.” *Criminology* **35**: 367–379.

Carson, Dena C. and Finn-Aage Esbensen. 2014. “The Mediating Effect of Delinquent Attitudes on Race, Race Heterogeneity, and Violent Offending.” *Journal of Crime and Justice* **37**: 23–41.

Carson, Dena C., Stephanie A. Wiley, and Finn-Aage Esbensen. 2017. “Differentiating between Delinquent Groups and Gangs: Moving Beyond Offender Consequences.” *Journal of Crime and Justice* **40**: 297–315.

Cloward, Richard A. and Lloyd Ohlin. 1960. *Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs*. New York: Free Press.

Cochran, John R., Shayne Jones, Angela M. Jones, and Christine S. Sellers. 2016. “Does Criminal Propensity Moderate the Effect of Social Learning Theory Variables on Intimate Partner Violence?” *Deviant Behavior* **37**: 965–976.

Cochran, John K., Jon Maskaly, Shayne Jones, and Christine S. Sellers. 2017. “Using Structural Equations to Model Akers’ Social Learning Theory with Data on Intimate Partner Violence.” *Crime and Delinquency* **63**: 39–60.

Cohen, Albert K. 1955. *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang*. New York: Free Press.

Curtis, Lynn A. 1975. *Violence, Race, and Culture*. Lexington, MA: Heath.

Dixon, Jo and Alan J. Lizotte. 1987. “Gun Ownership and the ‘Southern Subculture of Violence.’” *American Journal of Sociology* **93**: 383–405.

Dong, Beidi and Marvin D. Krohn. 2016. “Dual Trajectories of Gang Affiliation and Delinquent Peer Association During Adolescence: An Examination of Long-Term Offending Outcomes.” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* **45**: 746–762.

Ellison, Christopher G. 1991. “An Eye for an Eye? A Note on the Southern Subculture of Violence Thesis.” *Social Forces* **69**: 1223–1239.

Erickson, Jacob H., Andy Hochstetler, and Shawn F. Dorius. 2020. “Code in Transition? The Evolution of Code of the Street Adherence in Adolescence.” *Deviant Behavior* **41**: 329–347.

Felson, Richard B., Allen E. Liska, Scott J. South, and Thomas L. McNulty. 1994. “The Subculture of Violence and Delinquency: Individual vs. School Context Effects.” *Social Forces* **73**: 155–173.

Gallupe, Owen, Holly Nguyen, Martin Bouchard, Jennifer L. Schulenberg, Allison Chenier, and Katie D. Cook. 2016. “An Experimental Test of Deviant Modeling.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **53**: 482–505.

Hayes, Timothy C. and Matthew R. Lee. 2005. “The Southern Subculture of Honor and Violent Attitudes.” *Sociological Spectrum* **25**: 593–617.

Haynie, Dana L. 2009. “Peers and Crime.” In J. Mitchell Miller (ed.), *21st Century Criminology: A Reference Handbook*, pp. 125–132. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Haynie, Dana E., Eric Silver, and Brent Teasdale. 2006. “Neighborhood Characteristics, Peer Networks, and Adolescent Violence.” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **22**: 147–169.

Heimer, Karen. 1997. “Socioeconomic Status, Subcultural Definitions, and Violent Delinquency.” *Social Forces* **75**: 799–833.

Heimer Karen and Stacey De Coster. 1999. “The Gendering of Violent Delinquency.” *Criminology* **37**: 277–318.

Jensen, Gary F. 2007. “Social Learning and Violent Behavior.” In Daniel J. Flannery, Alexander T. Vazsonyi, and Irwin D. Waldman (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Violent Behavior and Aggression*, pp. 636–646. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kim, Jinho and Jason M. Fletcher. 2018. “The Influence of Classmates on Adolescent Criminal Activities in the United States.” *Deviant Behavior* **39**: 275–292.

Krohn, Marvin D. 1999. “Social Learning Theory: The Continuing Development of a Perspective.” *Theoretical Criminology* **3**: 462–476.

Kubrin, Charis E., Thomas D. Stucky, and Marvin D. Krohn. 2009. *Researching Theories of Crime and Deviance*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lee, Matthew R., William B. Bankston, Timothy C. Hayes, and Shaun A. Thomas. 2007. “Revisiting the Southern Subculture of Violence.” *Sociological Quarterly* **48**: 253–275.

Luckenbill, David F. and Daniel P. Doyle. 1989. “Structural Position and Violence: Developing a Cultural Explanation.” *Criminology* **27**: 419–436.

Markowitz, Fred E. and Richard B. Felson. 1998. “Socio-Demographic Differences in Attitudes and Violence.” *Criminology* **36**: 117–138.

Maruna, Shadd and Heith Copes. 2005. “What Have We Learned from Five Decades of Neutralization Research?” *Crime and Justice* **32**: 221–320.

Matsuda, Kristy N., Chris Melde, Terrance J. Taylor, Adrienne Freng, and Finn-Aage Esbensen. 2013. “Gang Membership and Adherence to the ‘Code of the Street.’” *Justice Quarterly* **30**(3): 440–468.

Matsueda, Ross L. 1988. “The Current State of Differential Association Theory.” *Crime and Delinquency* **34**: 277–306.

____. 2010. “Sutherland, Edwin H.: Differentiation Association and Differential Social Organization.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*, pp. 898–905. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Matza, David and Gresham M. Sykes. 1961. “Juvenile Delinquency and Subterranean Values.” *American Sociological Review* **26**: 712–719.

Messner, Steven F. 1988. “Research on Criminal and Socioeconomic Factors in Criminal Violence.” *Psychiatric Clinics of North America* **11**: 511–525.

Miller, Walter B. 1958. “Lower Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency.” *Journal of Social Issues* **14**: 5–19.

Mullins, Christopher W. 2006. *Holding Your Square: Masculinities, Streetlife, and Violence*. Portland, OR: Willan.

Nisbett, Richard E. and Doc Cohen. 1996. *Culture of Honor: The Psychology of Violence in the South*. Boulder, CO: Westview.

Pratt, Travis C., Francis T. Cullen, Christine S. Sellers, Thomas Winfree, Jr., Tamara D. Madensen, Leah E. Daigle, Noelle E. Fearn, and Jacinta M. Gau. 2010. “The Empirical Status of Social Learning Theory.” *Justice Quarterly* **27**: 765–802.

Salisbury, Emily J. 2013. “Social Learning Theory and Crime.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 115–139. New York: Oxford University Press.

Sampson, Robert J. and Dawn Jeglum Bartusch. 1999. *Attitudes Toward Crime, Police, and the Law: Individual and Neighborhood Differences*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice Research Preview.

Sampson, Robert J. and William Julius Wilson. 1995. “Toward a Theory of Race, Culture, and Urban Inequality.” In John Hagan and Ruth D. Peterson (eds.), *Crime and Inequality*, pp. 36–54. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Sellers, Christine S. and L. Thomas Winfree, Jr. 2010. “Akers, Ronald L.: Social Learning Theory.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*, pp. 21–29. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Simons, Ronald L., Man Kit Lei, Steven R. H. Beach, Gene H. Brody, Robert A. Philibert, and Frederick X. Gibbons. 2011. “Social Environment, Genes, and Aggression: Evidence Supporting the Differential Susceptibility Perspective.” *American Sociological Review* **76**: 883–912.

Snyder, James, John Reid, and Gerald Patterson. 2003. “A Social Learning Model of Child and Adolescent Antisocial Behavior.” In Benjamin B. Lahey, Terrie E. Moffit, and Avshalom Caspi (eds.), *Causes of Conduct Disorder and Juvenile Delinquency*, pp. 27–48. New York: Guilford Press.

Stewart, Eric A. and Ronald L. Simons. 2006. “Structure and Culture in African American Adolescent Violence: A Partial Test of the ‘Code of the Street’ Thesis.” *Justice Quarterly* **23**: 1–33.

____. 2010. “Race, Code of the Street and Violent Delinquency.” *Criminology* **48**: 569–605.

Sutherland, Edwin H. 1940. “White-Collar Criminality.” *American Sociological Review* **5**: 1–12.

Sutherland, Edwin H., Donald R. Cressey, and David F. Luckenbill. 1992. *Principles of Criminology*. Dix Hills, NY: General Hall.

Swartz, Kristin. 2010. “Anderson, Elijah: Code of the Street.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*, pp. 46–51. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sykes, Gresham M. and David Matza. 1957. “Techniques of Neutralization.” *American Sociological Review* **22**: 664–670.

Tanner, Julian. 1978. “New Directions for Subcultural Theory.” *Youth and Society* **9**: 343–372.

Thomas, Kyle J. and Timothy Mccuddy. 2020. “Affinity, Affiliation, and Guilt: Examining Between- and Within-Person Variability in Delinquent Peer Influence.” *Justice Quarterly* **37**: 715–738.

Thornberry, Terence P., Marvin D. Krohn, Alan J. Lizotte, Carolyn A. Smith, and Kimberly Tobin. 2003. *Gangs and Delinquency in Developmental Perspective*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Tittle, Charles R., Olena Antonaccio, and Ekaterina Botchkovar. 2012. “Social Learning, Reinforcement, and Crime: Evidence from Three European Cities.” *Social Forces* **90**: 863–890.

Tittle, Charles R. and Robert F. Meier. 1990. “Specifying the SES/Delinquency Relationship.” *Criminology* **28**: 271–299.

Topalli, Volkan. 2005. “When Being Good Is Bad: An Expansion of Neutralization Theory.” *Criminology* **43**: 797–836.

Walters, Glenn D. 2016. “Friends, Cognition, and Delinquency: Proactive and Reactive Criminal Thinking as Mediators of the Peer Influence and Peer Selection Effects among Male Delinquents.” *Justice Quarterly* **33**: 1055–1079.

Warner, Barbara D. 2003. “The Role of Attenuated Culture in Social Disorganization Theory.” *Criminology* **41**: 73–97.

Warr, Mark. 2001. “The Social Origins of Crime: Edwin Sutherland and the Theory of Differential Association.” In Raymond Paternoster and Ronet Bachma (eds.), *Explaining Crime and Criminals*, pp. 182–191. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

____. 2002. *Companions in Crime*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

____. 2012. “Peers and Delinquency.” In *Marvin D. Krohn, Alan J. Lizotte, and Gina Penly Hall (eds.), Handbook on Crime and Deviance*, pp. 383–404. New York: Springer.

Wilkinson, Deanna L. 2003. *Guns, Violence, and Identity Among African American and Latino Youth*. New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing.

Wilson, William Julius. 1987. *The Truly Disadvantaged*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wolfgang, Marvin E. and Franco Ferracuti. 1982. *The Subculture of Violence: Towards an Integrated Theory in Criminology*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Young, Jock. 2009. “Sub-Cultural Theory: Virtues and Vices.” http://www.malcolmread.co.uk/JockYoung/subculture.htm

Young, Jacob T. N., Cesar Rebellon, J. C. Barnes, and Frank M. Weerman. 2014. “Unpacking the Black Box of Peer Similarity in Deviance: Understanding the Mechanisms Linking Personal Behavior, Peer Behavior, and Perceptions.” *Criminology* **52**(1): 60–86.

7.
A Theory of Differential Association*

Edwin H. Sutherland

Donald R. Cressey

Before Sutherland developed his theory, crime was usually explained in terms of multiple factors—like social class, broken homes, age, race, urban or rural location, and mental disorder. Sutherland developed his theory of differential association in an effort to explain why these various factors were related to crime. In doing so, he hoped to organize and integrate the research on crime up to that point, as well as to guide future research.

Sutherland's theory is stated in the form of nine propositions. He argues that criminal behavior is learned by interacting with others, especially intimate others. Criminals learn both the techniques of committing crime and the definitions favorable to crime from these others. The sixth proposition, which forms the heart of the theory, states that "a person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to violation of law over definitions unfavorable to violation of law." According to Sutherland, factors such as social class, race, and broken homes influence crime because they affect the likelihood that individuals will associate with others who present definitions favorable to crime.

Sutherland's theory has had a tremendous influence on crime research, and it remains one of the dominant theories of crime. Studies on the causes of crime routinely attempt to determine whether individuals are associating with delinquent or criminal others. Although one can learn definitions favorable to crime from law-abiding individuals, one is most likely to learn such definitions from delinquent friends or criminal family members. These studies typically find that association with delinquent others is the strongest correlate of crime, and that these delinquent others partly influence crime by leading the individual to adopt beliefs conducive to crime (see Agnew, 2000; Akers, 2009; Akers et al., 2016; Kubrin et al., 2009; Warr, 2001 for summaries of such studies).

Sutherland's theory has also inspired much additional theorizing in criminology. Theorists have attempted to better describe the nature of those definitions favorable to violation of the law (see Chapter 15 by Sykes and Matza). They have attempted to better describe the processes by which we learn criminal behavior from others (see the description of social learning theory by Akers in Chapter 9). And they have drawn on Sutherland in an effort to explain group differences in crime rates (see the Anderson selection in this part). Sutherland's theory of differential association, then, is one of the enduring classics in criminology (for excellent discussions of the current state of differential association theory, see Matsueda, 1988, 2010; and Warr, 2001).

References

Agnew, Robert. 2000. "Sources of Criminality: Strain and Subcultural Theories." In Joseph F. Sheley (ed.), *Criminology: A Contemporary Handbook*, 3rd edition, pp. 349–371. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Akers, Ronald L. 2009. *Social Learning and Social Structure: A General Theory of Crime and Deviance*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Akers, Ronald L., Christine S. Sellers, and Wesley G. Jennings. 2016. *Criminological Theories: Introduction and Evaluation*, 7th edition. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

Kubrin, Charis E., Thomas D. Stucky, and Marvin D. Krohn. 2009. *Researching Theories of Crime and Deviance*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Matsueda, Ross L. 1988. "The Current State of Differential Association Theory." *Crime and Delinquency* **34**: 277–306.

____. 2010. "Sutherland, Edwin H.: Differentiation Association and Differential Social Organization." In *Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*, pp. 898–905. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Warr, Mark. 2001. "The Social Origins of Crime: Edwin Sutherland and the Theory of Differential Association." In Raymond Paternoster and Ronet Bachman (ed.), *Explaining Criminals and Crime*, pp. 182–191. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

The following statement refers to the process by which a particular person comes to engage in criminal behavior.

1. *Criminal behavior is learned*. Negatively, this means that criminal behavior is not inherited, as such; also, the person who is not already trained in crime does not invent criminal behavior, just as a person does not make mechanical inventions unless he has had training in mechanics.
2. *Criminal behavior is learned in interaction with other persons in a process of communication*. This communication is verbal in many respects but includes also "the communication of gestures."
3. *The principal part of the learning of criminal behavior occurs within intimate personal groups*. Negatively, this means that the impersonal agencies of communication, such as movies and newspapers, play a relatively unimportant part in the genesis of criminal behavior.
4. *When criminal behavior is learned, the learning includes (a) techniques of committing the crime, which are sometimes very complicated, sometimes very simple; (b) the specific direction of motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes.*
5. *The specific direction of motives and drives is learned from definitions of the legal codes as favorable or unfavorable*. In some societies an individual is surrounded by persons who invariably define the legal codes as rules to be observed, while in others he is surrounded by persons whose definitions are favorable to the violation of the legal codes. In our American society these definitions are almost always mixed, with the consequence that we have culture conflict in relation to the legal codes.
6. *A person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to violation of law over definitions unfavorable to violation of law*. This is the principle of differential association. It refers to both criminal and anti-criminal associations and has to do with counteracting forces. When persons become criminal, they do so because of contacts with criminal patterns and also because of isolation from anti-criminal patterns. Any person inevitably assimilates the surrounding culture unless other patterns are in conflict; a Southerner does not pronounce "r" because other Southerners do not pronounce "r." Negatively, this proposition of differential association means that associations which are neutral so far as crime is concerned have little or no effect on the genesis of criminal behavior. Much of the experience of a person is neutral in this sense, e.g., learning to brush one's teeth. This behavior has no negative or positive effect on criminal behavior except as it may be related to associations which are concerned with the legal codes. This neutral behavior is important especially as an occupier of the time of a child so that he is not in contact with criminal behavior during the time he is so engaged in the neutral behavior.

7. *Differential associations may vary in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity*. This means that associations with criminal behavior and also associations with anti-criminal behavior vary in those respects. "Frequency" and "duration" as modalities of associations are obvious and need no explanation. "Priority" is assumed to be important in the sense that lawful behavior developed in early childhood may persist throughout life, and also that delinquent behavior developed in early childhood may persist throughout life. This tendency, however, has not been adequately demonstrated, and priority seems to be important principally through its selective influence. "Intensity" is not precisely defined but it has to do with such things as the prestige of the source of a criminal or anti-criminal pattern and with emotional reactions related to the associations. In a precise description of the criminal behavior of a person these modalities would be stated in quantitative form and a mathematical ratio be reached. A formula in this sense has not been developed, and the development of such a formula would be extremely difficult.
8. *The process of learning criminal behavior by association with criminal and anti-criminal patterns involves all of the mechanisms that are involved in any other learning*. Negatively, this means that the learning of criminal behavior is not restricted to the process of imitation. A person who is seduced, for instance, learns criminal behavior by association, but this process would not ordinarily be described as imitation.
9. *While criminal behavior is an expression of general needs and values, it is not explained by those general needs and values since non-criminal behavior is an expression of the same needs and values*. Thieves generally steal in order to secure money, but likewise honest laborers work in order to secure money. The attempts by many scholars to explain criminal behavior by general drives and values, such as the happiness principle, striving for social status, the money motive, or frustration, have been and must continue to be futile since they explain lawful behavior as completely as they explain criminal behavior. They are similar to respiration, which is necessary for any behavior but which does not differentiate criminal from non-criminal behavior.

It is not necessary, at this level of explanation, to explain why a person has the associations which he has; this certainly involves a complex of many things. In an area where the delinquency rate is high, a boy who is sociable, gregarious, active, and athletic is very likely to come in contact with the other boys in the neighborhood, learn delinquent behavior from them, and become a gangster; in the same neighborhood the psychopathic boy who is isolated, introverted, and inert may remain at home, not become acquainted with the other boys in the neighborhood, and not become delinquent. In another situation, the sociable, athletic, aggressive boy may become a member of a scout troop and not become involved in delinquent behavior. The person's associations are determined in a general context of social organization. A child is ordinarily reared in a family; the place of residence of the family is determined largely by family income; and the delinquency rate is in many respects related to the rental value of the houses. Many other aspects of social organization affect the kinds of associations a person has.

The preceding explanation of criminal behavior purports to explain the criminal and non-criminal behavior of individual persons. As indicated earlier, it is possible to state sociological theories of criminal behavior which explain the criminality of a community, nation, or other group. The problem, when thus stated, is to account for variations in crime rates and involves a comparison of the crime rates of various groups or the crime rates of a particular group at different times. The explanation of a crime rate must be consistent with the explanation of the criminal behavior of the person, since the crime rate is a summary statement of the number of persons in the group who commit crimes and the frequency with which they commit crimes. One of the best explanations of crime rates from this point of view is that a high crime rate is due to social disorganization. The term "social disorganization" is not entirely satisfactory and it seems preferable to substitute for it the term "differential social organization." The postulate on which this theory is based, regardless of the name, is that crime is rooted in the social organization and is an expression of that social organization. A group may be organized for criminal behavior or organized against criminal behavior. Most

communities are organized both for criminal and anti-criminal behavior and in that sense the crime rate is an expression of the differential group organization. Differential group organization as an explanation of variations in crime rates is consistent with the differential association theory of the processes by which persons become criminals.

---

* Reprinted from Edwin H. Sutherland and Donald R. Cressey, "A Theory of Differential Association" in *Principles of Criminology*, 6th edition. Copyright © 1960 by Elaine S. Cressey. Reprinted by permission of Elaine S. Cressey.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Sutherland mean by "definitions favorable to violation of law"? Give examples of such definitions.
2. According to Sutherland, our associations do not carry equal weight; some are more influential than others. What types of associations carry the greatest weight in influencing our behavior?
3. Strain theorists, described in the next section, argue that frustration is a major cause of crime. How would Sutherland respond to this argument?
4. What policy recommendations might Sutherland have made for controlling crime?

8.
White-Collar Criminality*

Edwin H. Sutherland

On December 27, 1939, Edwin H. Sutherland ascended the podium to address the joint meeting of the American Economic Society and the American Sociological Society. His remarks were published shortly thereafter in February 1940 in the American Sociological Review; this article is reprinted here. Then on the faculty of Indiana University, Sutherland was granted this honor because he was president of the ASS—an acronym that eventually led to the organization's name change to the American Sociological Association (Geis and Goff, 1983)!

His topic for this mixed audience seemed quite appropriate: crime in the business world. He started by noting that economists know much about business but not about crime, whereas sociologists "are well acquainted with crime but not accustomed to consider it as expressed in business" (1940: 1). Sutherland had been collecting relevant materials since 1928 but had not presented them in a systematic fashion. On this occasion, however, he transformed the face of criminology by proposing to talk about "white-collar criminality." For this reason, he will always be known as the "father of white-collar crime."

The term "white collar" was a brilliant choice because it immediately conjured up an image of people in managerial and executive positions—"respectable or at least respected business and professional men," to use Sutherland's (1940: 1) words. This imagery was powerful precisely because it contradicted the prevailing view that criminals came from the lower class and often were fully unemployed. To suggest that upstanding white-collar workers were comparable with lower-class thugs was a poignant, if not radical, suggestion.

To avoid criticism, Sutherland asserted that his intentions were purely scientific. His comparison of white-collar and lower-class offenders that evening, he said, was merely to raise issues pertinent to "developing theories of criminal behavior, not for the purpose of muckraking or of reforming anything except criminology" (1940: 1). Geis and Goff (1983) find Sutherland's remarks to be disingenuous. In their view, Sutherland claimed the veneer of value-free science to mask his underlying outrage over the immoral practices that went unchecked in the domains of business, the professions, and politics.

Sutherland made three important contributions in his presentation and subsequent published essay. First, he not only introduced the construct of white-collar crime but also noted what kinds of actions fell under this conceptual umbrella. Most notably, he observed that "crime" could not be limited to those actions that resulted in an arrest by a police officer and/or a conviction by a criminal court. This was because most of the illegal actions by business executives, doctors, and politicians, for example, never came to the attention of the criminal law. These white-collar citizens engaged in scandals and swindles with impunity because they had the power to shape the passage and enforcement of criminal statutes. Thus, according to Sutherland, the key issue in defining white-collar crime was "convictability"—whether schemes could be prosecuted under the criminal law even if they never were.

Second, Sutherland put to rest any notion that the crimes by respectable members of society did little damage. A single white-collar criminal enterprise could illegally appropriate thousands if not millions of dollars. In fact,

Sutherland (1940: 4–5) observed, the "financial cost of white-collar crime is probably several times as great as the financial cost of all the crimes which are customarily regarded as the 'crime problem.'" Even more pernicious, however, is the impact of these offenses on the social fabric. When respectable people violate the trust inherent in their occupational position—for example, when bank presidents embezzle other people's money or executives' false product advertisements defraud their customers—they "damage the social relations" and "create distrust, which lowers social morale and produces social disorganization on a large scale" (1940: 5).

Third, Sutherland challenged the validity of existing criminological theories that inevitably explained crime by some characteristic supposedly linked to the lower class, whether that might be living in poverty or in a disorganized neighborhood or traits such as feeblemindedness or psychopathology. Obviously, members of the white-collar class were not marked by such social or personal disadvantage, and thus the source of their criminality must lie elsewhere. As a result, the reigning paradigms were flawed; they were not general theories capable of explaining involvement in all types of crime.

By contrast, this presented Sutherland with an opportunity to trumpet his own theory of differential association, which is presented earlier in Chapter 7 of this book. It is a general, not a class-biased explanation. Thus, Sutherland claims that just as juveniles might learn definitions favorable to violation of the law from gang members in their neighborhoods, so too were executives taught by co-workers that fraudulent schemes were just a smart way of doing business. The white-collar world also was "disorganized" in the sense that, similar to an inner-city slum, it was organized more to support criminal conduct than it was to combat it. In short, the concepts of differential association and social disorganization were able to explain the crimes of the rich and poor, and therefore they comprised a general theory of crime.

Nearly a decade after his initial essay, Sutherland (1983 [1949]) published his classic book, White Collar Crime. This work documented the extent of criminal activity in corporate America and also expanded his theory of white-collar crime. This was his last major contribution. Sutherland's life was cut short on October 11, 1950, when he died after suffering a stroke and hitting his head on a concrete pathway on the campus of Indiana University (Geis and Goff, 1983). The study of white-collar crime would receive some attention in the years to follow, but it did not reemerge as a major topic in criminology until the 1970s and 1980s. At that time, a generation of scholars raised and radicalized in the tumultuous 1960s was anxious to illuminate how power often allowed those populating white-collar positions to break the law with impunity (Cullen et al., 2006).

References

Cullen, Francis T., Gray Cavender, William J. Maakestad, and Michael Benson. 2006. *Corporate Crime Under Attack: The Fight to Criminalize Business Violence*, 2nd edition. Cincinnati: Anderson/LexisNexis.

Geis, Gilbert and Colin Goff. 1983. "Introduction." In Edwin H. Sutherland, *White Collar Crime: The Uncut Version*, pp. ix–xxxiii. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Sutherland, Edwin H. 1940. "White Collar Criminality." *American Sociological Review* **5**: 1–12.

____. 1983 [1949]. *White Collar Crime: The Uncut Version*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

This paper is concerned with crime in relation to business. The economists are well acquainted with business methods but not accustomed to consider them from the point of view of crime; many sociologists are well acquainted with crime but not accustomed to consider it as expressed in business. This paper is an attempt to integrate these two bodies of knowledge. More accurately stated, it is a comparison of crime in the upper or white-collar class, composed of respectable or at least respected business and professional men, and crime in the lower class, composed of persons of low socioeconomic status. This comparison is made for the purpose of developing the theories of criminal behavior, not for the purpose of muckraking or of reforming anything except criminology.

The criminal statistics show unequivocally that crime, *as popularly conceived and officially measured*, has a high incidence in the lower class and a low incidence in the upper class; less than two percent of the persons committed to prisons in a year belong to the upper class. These statistics refer to criminals handled by the police, the criminal and juvenile courts, and the prisons, and to such crimes as murder, assault, burglary, robbery, larceny, sex offenses, and drunkenness, but exclude traffic violations.

The criminologists have used the case histories and criminal statistics derived from these agencies of criminal justice as their principal data. From them, they have derived general theories of criminal behavior. These theories are that, since crime is concentrated in the lower class, it is caused by poverty or by personal and social characteristics believed to be associated statistically with poverty, including feeblemindedness, psychopathic deviations, slum neighborhoods, and "deteriorated" families. This statement, of course, does not do justice to the qualifications and variations in the conventional theories of criminal behavior, but it presents correctly their central tendency.

The thesis of this paper is that the conception and explanations of crime which have just been described are misleading and incorrect, that crime is in fact not closely correlated with poverty or with the psychopathic and sociopathic conditions associated with poverty, and that an adequate explanation of criminal behavior must proceed along quite different lines. The conventional explanations are invalid principally because they are derived from biased samples. The samples are biased in that they have not included vast areas of criminal behavior of persons not in the lower class. One of these neglected areas is the criminal behavior of business and professional men, which will be analyzed in this paper.

The "robber barons" of the last half of the nineteenth century were white-collar criminals, as practically everyone now agrees. Their attitudes are illustrated by these statements: Colonel Vanderbilt asked, "You don't suppose you can run a railroad in accordance with the statutes, do you?" A. B. Stickney, a railroad president, said to sixteen other railroad presidents in the home of J. P. Morgan in 1890, "I have the utmost respect for you gentlemen, individually, but as railroad presidents I wouldn't trust you with my watch out of my sight." Charles Francis Adams said, "The difficulty in railroad management ... lies in the covetousness, want of good faith, and low moral tone of railway managers, in the complete absence of any high standard of commercial honesty."

The present-day white-collar criminals, who are more suave and deceptive than the "robber barons," are represented by Krueger, Stavisky, Whitney, Mitchell, Foshay, Insull, the Van Sweringens, Musica-Coster, Fall, Sinclair, and many other merchant princes and captains of finance and industry, and by a host of lesser followers. Their criminality has been demonstrated again and again in the investigations of land offices, railways, insurance, munitions, banking, public utilities, stock exchanges, the oil industry, real estate, reorganization committees, receiverships, bankruptcies, and politics. Individual cases of such criminality are reported frequently, and in many periods more important crime news may be found on the financial pages of newspapers than on the front pages. White-collar criminality is found in every occupation, as can be discovered readily in casual conversation with a representative of an occupation by asking him, "What crooked practices are found in your occupation?"

White-collar criminality in business is expressed most frequently in the form of misrepresentation in financial statements of corporations, manipulation in the stock exchange, commercial bribery, bribery of public officials directly or indirectly in order to secure favorable contracts and legislation, misrepresentation in advertising and salesmanship, embezzlement and misapplication of funds, short weights and measures and misgrading of commodities, tax frauds, misapplication of funds in receiverships and bankruptcies. These are what Al Capone called "the legitimate rackets." These and many others are found in abundance in the business world.

In the medical profession, which is here used as an example because it is probably less criminalistic than some other professions, are found illegal sale of alcohol and narcotics, abortion, illegal services to underworld criminals,

fraudulent reports and testimony in accident cases, extreme cases of unnecessary treatment, fake specialists, restriction of competition, and fee-splitting. Fee-splitting is a violation of a specific law in many states and a violation of the conditions of admission to the practice of medicine in all. The physician who participates in fee-splitting tends to send his patients to the surgeon who will give him the largest fee rather than to the surgeon who will do the best work. It has been reported that two thirds of the surgeons in New York City split fees, and that more than one half of the physicians in a central western city who answered a questionnaire on this point favored fee-splitting.

These varied types of white-collar crimes in business and the professions consist principally of violation of delegated or implied trust, and many of them can be reduced to two categories: misrepresentation of asset values and duplicity in the manipulation of power. The first is approximately the same as fraud or swindling; the second is similar to the double-cross. The latter is illustrated by the corporation director who, acting on inside information, purchases land which the corporation will need and sells it at a fantastic profit to his corporation. The principle of this duplicity is that the offender holds two antagonistic positions, one of which is a position of trust, which is violated, generally by misapplication of funds, in the interest of the other position. A football coach, permitted to referee a game in which his own team was playing, would illustrate this antagonism of positions. Such situations cannot be completely avoided in a complicated business structure, but many concerns make a practice of assuming such antagonistic functions and regularly violating the trust thus delegated to them. When compelled by law to make a separation of their functions, they make a nominal separation and continue by subterfuge to maintain the two positions.

An accurate statistical comparison of the crimes of the two classes is not available. The most extensive evidence regarding the nature and prevalence of white-collar criminality is found in the reports of the larger investigations to which reference was made. Because of its scattered character, that evidence is assumed rather than summarized here. A few statements will be presented, as illustrations rather than as proof of the prevalence of this criminality.

The Federal Trade Commission in 1920 reported that commercial bribery was a prevalent and common practice in many industries. In certain chain stores, the net shortage in weights was sufficient to pay 3.4 percent on the investment in those commodities. Of the cans of ether sold to the Army in 1923–1925, 70 percent were rejected because of impurities. In Indiana, during the summer of 1934, 40 percent of the ice cream samples tested in a routine manner by the Division of Public Health were in violation of law. The Comptroller of the Currency in 1908 reported that violations of law were found in 75 percent of the banks examined in a three months' period. Lie detector tests of all employees in several Chicago banks, supported in almost all cases by confessions, showed that 20 percent of them had stolen bank property. A public accountant estimated, in the period prior to the Securities and Exchange Commission, that 80 percent of the financial statements of corporations were misleading. James M. Beck said, "Diogenes would have been hard put to it to find an honest man in the Wall Street which I knew as a corporation lawyer" (in 1916).

White-collar criminality in politics, which is generally recognized as fairly prevalent, has been used by some as a rough gauge by which to measure white-collar criminality in business. James A. Farley said, "The standards of conduct are as high among officeholders and politicians as they are in commercial life," and Cermak, while mayor of Chicago, said, "There is less graft in politics than in business." John Flynn wrote, "The average politician is the merest amateur in the gentle art of graft, compared with his brother in the field of business." And Walter Lippmann wrote, "Poor as they are, the standards of public life are so much more social than those of business that financiers who enter politics regard themselves as philanthropists."

These statements obviously do not give a precise measurement of the relative criminality of the white-collar class, but they are adequate evidence that crime is not so highly concentrated in the lower class as the usual statistics indicate. Also, these statements obviously do not mean that every business and professional man is a criminal, just as the usual theories do not mean that every man in the lower class is a criminal. On the other hand, the preceding

statements refer in many cases to the leading corporations in America and are not restricted to the disreputable business and professional men who are called quacks, ambulance chasers, bucket-shop operators, dead-beats, and fly-by-night swindlers.

The financial cost of white-collar crime is probably several times as great as the financial cost of all the crimes which are customarily regarded as the "crime problem." An officer of a chain grocery store in one year embezzled $600,000, which was six times as much as the annual losses from five hundred burglaries and robberies of the stores in that chain. Public enemies numbered one to six secured $130,000 by burglary and robbery in 1938, while the sum stolen by Krueger is estimated at $250,000,000, or nearly two thousand times as much. *The New York Times* in 1931 reported four cases of embezzlement in the United States with a loss of more than a million dollars each and a combined loss of nine million dollars. Although a million-dollar burglar or robber is practically unheard of, these million-dollar embezzlers are small-fry among white-collar criminals. The estimated loss to investors in one investment trust from 1929 to 1935 was $580,000,000, due primarily to the fact that 75 percent of the values in the portfolio were in securities of affiliated companies, although it advertised the importance of diversification in investments and its expert services in selecting safe securities. In Chicago, the claim was made six years ago that householders had lost $54,000,000 in two years during the administration of a city sealer who granted immunity from inspection to stores which provided Christmas baskets for his constituents.

The financial loss from white-collar crime, great as it is, is less important than the damage to social relations. White-collar crimes violate trust and therefore create distrust, which lowers social morale and produces social disorganization on a large scale. Other crimes produce relatively little effect on social institutions or social organization.

White-collar crime is real crime. It is not ordinarily called crime, and calling it by this name does not make it worse, just as refraining from calling it crime does not make it better than it otherwise would be. It is called crime here in order to bring it within the scope of criminology, which is justified because it is in violation of the criminal law.... [White collar crimes and the crimes of the lower class] differ principally in the implementation of the criminal laws which apply to them. The crimes of the lower class are handled by policemen, prosecutors, and judges, with penal sanctions in the form of fines, imprisonment, and death. The crimes of the upper class either result in no official action at all, or result in suits for damages in civil courts, or are handled by inspectors, and by administrative boards or commissions, with penal sanctions in the form of warnings, orders to cease and desist, occasionally the loss of a license, and only in extreme cases by fines or prison sentences. Thus, the white-collar criminals are segregated administratively from other criminals, and largely as a consequence of this are not regarded as real criminals by themselves, the general public, or the criminologists.

This difference in the implementation of the criminal law is due principally to the difference in the social position of the two types of offenders. Judge Woodward, when imposing sentence upon the officials of the H.O. Stone and Company, bankrupt real estate firm in Chicago, who had been convicted in 1933 of the use of the mails to defraud, said to them, "You are men of affairs, of experience, of refinement and culture, of excellent reputation and standing in the business and social world." That statement might be used as a general characterization of white-collar criminals for they are oriented basically to legitimate and respectable careers. Because of their social status they have a loud voice in determining what goes into the statutes and how the criminal law as it affects themselves is implemented and administered....

[So] the upper class has greater influence in moulding the criminal law and its administration to its own interests than does the lower class. The privileged position of white-collar criminals before the law results to a slight extent from bribery and political pressures, principally from the respect in which they are held and without special effort on

their part. The most powerful group in medieval society secured relative immunity by "benefit of clergy," and now our most powerful groups secure relative immunity by "benefit of business or profession."

In contrast with the power of the white-collar criminals is the weakness of their victims. Consumers, investors, and stockholders are unorganized, lack technical knowledge, and cannot protect themselves. Daniel Drew, after taking a large sum of money by sharp practice from Vanderbilt in the Erie deal, concluded that it was a mistake to take money from a powerful man on the same level as himself and declared that in the future he would confine his efforts to outsiders, scattered all over the country, who wouldn't be able to organize and fight back. White-collar criminality flourishes at points where powerful business and professional men come in contact with persons who are weak. In this respect, it is similar to stealing candy from a baby. Many of the crimes of the lower class, on the other hand, are committed against persons of wealth and power in the form of burglary and robbery. Because of this difference in the comparative power of the victims, the white-collar criminals enjoy relative immunity.

Embezzlement is an interesting exception to white-collar criminality in this respect. Embezzlement is usually theft from an employer by an employee, and the employee is less capable of manipulating social and legal forces in his own interest than is the employer. As might have been expected, the laws regarding embezzlement were formulated long before laws for the protection of investors and consumers.

The theory that criminal behavior in general is due either to poverty or to the psychopathic and sociopathic conditions associated with poverty can now be shown to be invalid for three reasons. First, the generalization is based on a biased sample which omits almost entirely the behavior of white-collar criminals. The criminologists have restricted their data, for reasons of convenience and ignorance rather than of principle, largely to cases dealt with in criminal courts and juvenile courts, and these agencies are used principally for criminals from the lower economic strata. Consequently, their data are grossly biased from the point of view of the economic status of criminals and their generalization that criminality is closely associated with poverty is not justified.

Second, the generalization that criminality is closely associated with poverty obviously does not apply to white-collar criminals. With a small number of exceptions, they are not in poverty, were not reared in slums or badly deteriorated families, and are not feebleminded or psychopathic. They were seldom problem children in their earlier years and did not appear in juvenile courts or child guidance clinics. The proposition, derived from the data used by the conventional criminologists, that "the criminal of today was the problem child of yesterday" is seldom true of white-collar criminals. The idea that the causes of criminality are to be found almost exclusively in childhood similarly is fallacious. Even if poverty is extended to include the economic stresses which afflict business in a period of depression, it is not closely correlated with white-collar criminality. Probably at no time within fifty years have white-collar crimes in the field of investments and of corporate management been so extensive as during the boom period of the twenties.

Third, the conventional theories do not even explain lower class criminality. The sociopathic and psychopathic factors which have been emphasized doubtless have something to do with crime causation, but these factors have not been related to a general process which is found both in white-collar criminality and lower class criminality and therefore they do not explain the criminality of either class. They may explain the manner or method of crime—why lower class criminals commit burglary or robbery rather than false pretenses.

In view of these defects in the conventional theories, an hypothesis that will explain both white-collar criminality and lower class criminality is needed. For reasons of economy, simplicity, and logic, the hypothesis should apply to both classes, for this will make possible the analysis of causal factors freed from the encumbrances of the administrative devices which have led criminologists astray. Shaw and McKay and others, working exclusively in the field of lower class crime, have found the conventional theories inadequate to account for variations within the data of lower class

crime and from that point of view have been working toward an explanation of crime in terms of a more general social process. Such efforts will be greatly aided by the procedure which has been described.

The hypothesis which is here suggested as a substitute for the conventional theories is that white-collar criminality, just as other systematic criminality, is learned; that it is learned in direct or indirect association with those who already practice the behavior; and that those who learn this criminal behavior are segregated from frequent and intimate contacts with law-abiding behavior. Whether a person becomes a criminal or not is determined largely by the comparative frequency and intimacy of his contacts with the two types of behavior. This may be called the process of differential association. It is a genetic explanation both of white-collar criminality and lower class criminality. Those who become white-collar criminals generally start their careers in good neighborhoods and good homes, graduate from colleges with some idealism, and with little selection on their part, get into particular business situations in which criminality is practically a folkway and are induced into that system of behavior just as into any other folkway. The lower class criminals generally start their careers in deteriorated neighborhoods and families, find delinquents at hand from whom they acquire the attitudes toward, and techniques of, crime through association with delinquents and in partial segregation from law-abiding people. The essentials of the process are the same for the two classes of criminals. This is not entirely a process of assimilation, for inventions are frequently made, perhaps more frequently in white-collar crime than in lower class crime. The inventive geniuses for the lower class criminals are generally professional criminals, while the inventive geniuses for many kinds of white-collar crime are generally lawyers.

A second general process is social disorganization in the community. Differential association culminates in crime because the community is not organized solidly against that behavior. The law is pressing in one direction, and other forces are pressing in the opposite direction. In business, the “rules of the game” conflict with the legal rules. A business man who wants to obey the law is driven by his competitors to adopt their methods. This is well illustrated by the persistence of commercial bribery in spite of the strenuous efforts of business organizations to eliminate it. Groups and individuals are individuated; they are more concerned with their specialized group or individual interests than with the larger welfare. Consequently, it is not possible for the community to present a solid front in opposition to crime. The Better Business Bureaus and Crime Commissions, composed of business and professional men, attack burglary, robbery, and cheap swindles, but overlook the crimes of their own members. The forces which impinge on the lower class are similarly in conflict. Social disorganization affects the two classes in similar ways.

I have presented a brief and general description of white-collar criminality on a framework of argument regarding theories of criminal behavior. That argument, stripped of the description, may be stated in the following propositions:

1. White-collar criminality is real criminality, being in all cases in violation of the criminal law.
2. White-collar criminality differs from lower class criminality principally in an implementation of the criminal law which segregates white-collar criminals administratively from other criminals.
3. The theories of the criminologists that crime is due to poverty or to psychopathic and sociopathic conditions statistically associated with poverty are invalid because, first, they are derived from samples which are grossly biased with respect to socioeconomic status; second, they do not apply to the white-collar criminals; and third, they do not even explain the criminality of the lower class, since the factors are not related to a general process characteristic of all criminality.
4. A theory of criminal behavior which will explain both white-collar criminality and lower class criminality is needed.
5. An hypothesis of this nature is suggested in terms of differential association and social disorganization.

* Edwin H. Sutherland. 1940. “White-Collar Criminality.” *American Sociological Review* 5 (February), pp. 1–12.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is Sutherland called the "father of white-collar crime"?
2. What is white-collar crime? How does it differ from street crime?
3. What is a "general theory" of crime? Why did Sutherland believe that his theory of differential association explained both white-collar and traditional street crimes?
4. Do you think that it might be possible to have separate theories for, say, robbery and for price-fixing? Do you think that all theories of crime should be general or that specialized theories might be required to explain different types of crime?
5. Why might white-collar crimes be more harmful to society than street crime?

9.
A Social Learning Theory of Crime*

Ronald L. Akers

As Akers points out in this selection, his social learning theory is a reformulation and extension of Sutherland's differential association theory. Differential association theory argues that criminal behavior is learned in interaction with others, but it does not specify the mechanisms by which such behavior is learned. Burgess and Akers (1966) and Akers (1985, 2009; Akers et al., 2016) draw on several theories of learning, particularly behavioral theory and social learning theory in psychology, to more precisely describe how crime is learned.

Akers's theory is compatible with Sutherland's theory. Like Sutherland, Akers argues that we learn to engage in crime through exposure to and the adoption of definitions favorable to crime. Akers, however, more fully describes the nature of such definitions. In doing so, he draws heavily on Sykes and Matza's description of the techniques of neutralization (see Chapter 15)—although he also argues that the definitions favorable to crime include more than neutralization techniques (i.e., he argues that there are both positive and neutralizing definitions favorable to crime).

At the same time, Akers extends differential association theory. He argues that crime may also be learned through imitation and differential reinforcement. Akers's theory, then, is much broader than that of Sutherland. In fact, Akers (1985, 2009) has argued that his theory is capable of subsuming most of the major sociological theories of crime. As Akers points out in this selection, his theory has received much empirical support. As a consequence, social learning theory is one of the leading theories of why individuals engage in crime. Further, Akers (2009) has recently extended social learning theory to the macro level, with the theory being used to explain group differences in crime rates, including differences between sociodemographic groups (e.g., class and gender groups), communities, and societies. As described in this selection, features of the larger social environment, as well as the individual's position in the larger environment, affect crime partly through their effect on the individual's "exposure to criminal associations, models, definitions, and reinforcement." Preliminary data provide some support for this argument (see Akers, 2009; Akers and Jensen, 2003, 2010; Akers et al., 2012, 2016; Haynie et al., 2006).

References

Akers, Ronald L. 1985. *Deviant Behavior: A Social Learning Approach*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

____. 2009. *Social Learning and Social Structure: A General Theory of Crime and Deviance: A Guide for the New Century—Advances in Criminological Theory, Volume11*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Akers, Ronald L. and Gary F. Jensen, eds. 2003. *Social Learning Theory and the Explanation of Crime: A Guide for the New Century—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **11**. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

____. 2010. "Social Learning Theory: Process and Structure in Criminal and Deviant Behavior." In Eugene McLaughlin and Tim Newburn (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 56–71. London: Sage.

____. 2012 “Social Learning Theory.” In Barry C. Feld and Donna M. Bishop (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Juvenile Crime and Juvenile Justice*, pp. 307–335. New York: Oxford University Press.

Akers, Ronald L., Christine S. Sellers, and Wesley G. Jennings. 2016. *Criminological Theories*, 7th edition. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

Burgess, Robert L. and Ronald L. Akers. 1966. “A Differential Association-Reinforcement Theory of Criminal Behavior.” *Social Problems* **14**: 128–147.

Haynie, Dana E., Eric Silver, and Brent Teasdale. 2006. “Neighborhood Characteristics, Peer Networks, and Adolescent Violence.” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **22**: 149–169.

---

* Copyright © 1994. Reprinted with permission from Roxbury Publishing Company.

Development of the Theory

Sutherland asserted in the eighth statement of his theory that all the mechanisms of learning are involved in criminal behavior. However, beyond a brief comment that more is involved than direct imitation (Trade, 1912), he did not explain what the mechanisms of learning are. These learning mechanisms were specified by Burgess and Akers (1966b) in their "differential association-reinforcement" theory of criminal behavior. Burgess and Akers produced a full reformulation that retained the principles of differential association, combining them with, and restating them in terms of, the learning principles of operant and respondent conditioning that had been developed by behavioral psychologists. Akers followed up his early work with Burgess to develop social learning theory, applying it to criminal, delinquent, and deviant behavior in general. He has modified the theory, provided a fully explicated presentation of its concepts, examined it in light of the critiques and research by others, and carried out his own research to test its central propositions (Akers, 1973; 1977; 1985; 1998).

Social learning theory is not competitive with differential association theory. Instead, it is a broader theory that retains all the differential association processes in Sutherland's theory (albeit clarified and somewhat modified) and integrates it with differential reinforcement and other principles of behavioral acquisition, continuation, and cessation (Akers, 1985: 41). Thus, research findings supportive of differential association also support the integrated theory. But social learning theory explains criminal and delinquent behavior more thoroughly than does the original differential association theory (see, for instance, Akers et al., 1979; Warr and Stafford, 1991).

Burgess and Akers (1966b) explicitly identified the learning mechanisms as those found in modern behavioral theory. They retained the concepts of differential association and definitions from Sutherland's theory, but conceptualized them in more behavioral terms and added concepts from behavioral learning theory. These concepts include differential reinforcement, whereby "operant" behavior (the voluntary actions of the individual) is conditioned or shaped by rewards and punishments. They also contain classical or "respondent" conditioning (the conditioning of involuntary reflex behavior); discriminative stimuli (the environmental and internal stimuli that provides cues or signals for behavior), schedules of reinforcement (the rate and ratio in which rewards and punishments follow behavioral responses), and other principles of behavior modification.

Social learning theory retains a strong element of the symbolic interactionism found in the concepts of differential association and definitions from Sutherland's theory (Akers, 1985: 39–70). Symbolic interactionism is the theory that social interaction is mainly the exchange of meaning and symbols; individuals have the cognitive capacity to imagine themselves in the role of others and incorporate this into their conceptions of themselves (Ritzer, 1992). This, and the explicit inclusion of such concepts as imitation, anticipated reinforcement, and self-reinforcement, makes social learning "soft behaviorism" (Akers, 1985: 65). As a result, the theory is closer to cognitive learning theories, such as Albert Bandura's (1973; 1977; 1986; Bandura and Walters, 1963), than to the radical or orthodox operant behaviorism of B. F. Skinner (1953; 1959) with which Burgess and Akers began.

The Central Concepts and Propositions of Social Learning Theory

The word *learning* should not be taken to mean that the theory is only about how novel criminal behavior is acquired. "Behavioral principles are not limited to learning but are fundamental principles of performance [that account for] … the acquisition, maintenance, and modification of human behavior" (Andrews and Bonta, 1998: 150).

Social learning theory offers an explanation of crime and deviance which embraces variables that operate both to motivate and control criminal behavior, both to promote and undermine conformity. The probability of criminal or conforming behavior occurring is a function of the balance of these influences on behavior.

> The basic assumption in social learning theory is that the same learning process in a context of social structure, interaction, and situation, produces both conforming and deviant behavior. The difference lies in the direction ... [of] the balance of influences on behavior....
>
> The probability that persons will engage in criminal and deviant behavior is increased and the probability of their conforming to the norm is decreased when they differentially associate with others who commit criminal behavior and espouse definitions favorable to it, are relatively more exposed in-person or symbolically to salient criminal/deviant models, define it as desirable or justified in a situation discriminative for the behavior, and have received in the past and anticipate in the current or future situation relatively greater reward than punishment for the behavior. (Akers, 1998: 50)

As these quotations show, while referring to all aspects of the learning process, Akers' development of the theory has relied principally on four major concepts: *differential association, definitions, differential reinforcement*, and *imitation* (Akers et al., 1979; Akers, 1985; Akers, 1998).

Differential association. Differential association refers to the process whereby one is exposed to normative definitions favorable or unfavorable to illegal or law-abiding behavior. Differential association has both behavioral interactional and normative dimensions. The interactional dimension is the direct association and interaction with others who engage in certain kinds of behavior, as well as the indirect association and identification with more distant reference groups. The normative dimension is the different patterns of norms and values to which an individual is exposed through this association.

The groups with which one is in differential association provide the major social contexts in which all the mechanisms of social learning operate. They not only expose one to definitions, they also present them with models to imitate and with differential reinforcement (source, schedule, value, and amount) for criminal or conforming behavior. The most important of these groups are the primary ones of family and friends, though they may also be secondary and reference groups. Neighbors, churches, school teachers, physicians, the law and authority figures, and other individuals and groups in the community (as well as mass media and other more remote sources of attitudes and models) have varying degrees of effect on the individual's propensity to commit criminal and delinquent behavior. Those associations that occur earlier (priority), last longer and occupy more of one's time (duration), take place most often (frequency), and involve others with whom one has the more important or closer relationship (intensity) will have the greater effect on behavior.

Definitions. Definitions are one's own attitudes or meanings that one attaches to given behavior. That is, they are orientations, rationalizations, definitions of the situation, and other evaluative and moral attitudes that define the commission of an act as right or wrong, good or bad, desirable or undesirable, justified or unjustified.

In social learning theory, these definitions are both general and specific. General beliefs include religious, moral, and other conventional values and norms that are favorable to conforming behavior and unfavorable to committing any deviant or criminal acts. Specific definitions orient the person to particular acts or series of acts. Thus, one may believe that it is morally wrong to steal and that laws against theft should be obeyed, but at the same time one may see little wrong with smoking marijuana and rationalize that it is all right to violate laws against drug possession.

The greater the extent to which one holds attitudes that disapprove of certain acts, the less one is likely to engage in them. Conventional beliefs are negative toward criminal behavior. Conversely, the more one's own attitudes approve of a behavior, the greater the chances are that one will do it. Approving definitions favorable to the commission of criminal or deviant behavior are basically positive or neutralizing. Positive definitions are beliefs or attitudes which

make the behavior morally desirable or wholly permissible. Neutralizing definitions favor the commission of crime by justifying or excusing it. They view the act as something that is probably undesirable but, given the situation, is nonetheless all right, justified, excusable, necessary, or not really bad to do. The concept of neutralizing definitions in social learning theory incorporates the notions of verbalizations, rationalizations, techniques of neutralizations, accounts, disclaimers, and moral disengagement (Cressey, 1953; Sykes and Matza, 1957; Lyman and Scott, 1970; Hewitt and Stokes, 1975; Bandura, 1990). Neutralizing attitudes include such beliefs as, "Everybody has a racket," "I can't help myself, I was born this way," "I am not at fault," "I am not responsible," "I was drunk and didn't know what I was doing," "I just blew my top," "They can afford it," "He deserved it," and other excuses and justification for committing deviant acts and victimizing others. These definitions favorable and unfavorable to criminal and delinquent behavior are developed through imitation and differential reinforcement. Cognitively, they provide a mind-set that makes one more willing to commit the act when the opportunity occurs. Behaviorally, they affect the commission of deviant or criminal behavior by acting as internal discriminative stimuli. Discriminative stimuli operate as cues or signals to the individual as to what responses are appropriate or expected in a given situation.

Some of the definitions favorable to deviance are so intensely held that they almost "require" one to violate the law. For instance, the radical ideologies of revolutionary groups provide strong motivation for terrorist acts, just as the fervent moral stance of some anti-abortion groups justifies in their minds the need to engage in civil disobedience. For the most part, however, definitions favorable to crime and delinquency do not "require" or strongly motivate action in this sense. Rather, they are conventional beliefs so weakly held that they provide no restraint or are positive or neutralizing attitudes that facilitate law violation in the right set of circumstances.

Differential reinforcement. Differential reinforcement refers to the balance of anticipated or actual rewards and punishments that follow or are consequences of behavior. Whether individuals will refrain from or commit a crime at any given time (and whether they will continue or desist from doing so in the future) depends on the past, present, and anticipated future rewards and punishments for their actions. The probability that an act will be committed or repeated is increased by rewarding outcomes or reactions to it, e.g., obtaining approval, money, food, or pleasant feelings—positive reinforcement. The likelihood that an action will be taken is also enhanced when it allows the person to avoid or escape aversive or unpleasant events—negative reinforcement. Punishment may also be direct (positive), in which painful or unpleasant consequences are attached to a behavior; or indirect (negative), in which a reward or pleasant consequence is removed. Just as there are modalities of association, there are modalities of reinforcement—amount, frequency, and probability. The greater the value or amount of reinforcement for the person's behavior, the more frequently it is reinforced, and the higher the probability that it will be reinforced (as balanced against alternative behavior), the greater the likelihood that it will occur and be repeated. The reinforcement process does not operate in the social environment in a simple either/or fashion. Rather, it operates according to a "matching function" in which the occurrence of, and changes in, each of several different behaviors correlate with the probability and amount of, and changes in, the balance of reward and punishment attached to each behavior (Herrnstein, 1961; Hamblin, 1979; Conger and Simons, 1995).

Reinforcers and punishers can be nonsocial; for example, the direct physical effects of drugs and alcohol. However, whether or not these effects are experienced positively or negatively is contingent upon previously learned expectations. Through social reinforcement, one learns to interpret the effects as pleasurable and enjoyable or as frightening and unpleasant. Individuals can learn without contact, directly or indirectly, with social reinforcers and punishers. There may be a physiological basis for the tendency of some individuals (such as those prone to sensation-seeking) more than others to find certain forms of deviant behavior intrinsically rewarding (Wood et al., 1995). However, the theory proposes that most of the learning in criminal and deviant behavior is the result of social exchange in which the words, responses, presence, and behavior of other persons directly reinforce behavior, provide

the setting for reinforcement (discriminative stimuli), or serve as the conduit through which other social rewards and punishers are delivered or made available.

The concept of social reinforcement (and punishment) goes beyond the direct reactions of others present while an act is committed. It also includes the whole range of actual and anticipated, tangible and intangible rewards valued in society or subgroups. Social rewards can be highly symbolic. Their reinforcing effects can come from their fulfilling ideological, religious, political, or other goals. Even those rewards which we consider to be very tangible, such as money and material possessions, gain their reinforcing value from the prestige and approval value they have in society. Nonsocial reinforcement, therefore, is more narrowly confined to unconditioned physiological and physical stimuli. In self-reinforcement the individual exercises self-control, reinforcing or punishing one's own behavior by taking the role of others, even when alone.

Imitation. Imitation refers to the engagement in behavior after the observation of similar behavior in others. Whether or not the behavior modeled by others will be imitated is affected by the characteristics of the models, the behavior observed, and the observed consequences of the behavior (Bandura, 1977). The observation of salient models in primary groups and in the media affects both pro-social and deviant behavior (Donnerstein and Linz, 1995). It is more important in the initial acquisition and performance of novel behavior than in the maintenance or cessation of behavioral patterns once established, but it continues to have some effect in maintaining behavior.

The Social Learning Process: Sequence and Feedback Effects

These social learning variables are all part of an underlying process that is operative in each individual's learning history and in the immediate situation in which an opportunity for a crime occurs. Akers stresses that social learning is a complex process with reciprocal and feedback effects. The reciprocal effects are not seen as equal, however. Akers hypothesizes a typical temporal sequence or process by which persons come to the point of violating the law or engaging in other deviant acts (Akers, 1998).

This process is one in which the balance of learned definitions, imitation of criminal or deviant models, and the anticipated balance of reinforcement produces the initial delinquent or deviant act. The facilitative effects of these variables continue in the repetition of acts, although imitation becomes less important than it was in the first commission of the act. After initiation, the actual social and non-social reinforcers and punishers affect whether or not the acts will be repeated and at what level of frequency. Not only the behavior itself, but also the definitions are affected by the consequences of the initial act. Whether a deviant act will be committed in a situation that presents the opportunity depends on the learning history of the individual and the set of reinforcement contingencies in that situation.

> The actual social sanctions and other effects of engaging in the behavior may be perceived differently, but to the extent that they are more rewarding than alternative behavior, then the deviant behavior will be repeated under similar circumstances. Progression into more frequent or sustained patterns of deviant behavior is promoted [to the extent] that reinforcement, exposure to deviant models, and definitions are not offset by negative formal and informal sanctions and definitions. (Akers, 1985: 60)

The theory does not hypothesize that definitions favorable to law violation only precede and are unaffected by the initiation of criminal acts. Acts in violation of the law can occur in the absence of any thought given to right and wrong. Furthermore, definitions may be applied by the individual retroactively to excuse or justify an act already committed. To the extent that such excuses successfully mitigate others' negative sanctions or one's self-punishment, however, they become cues for the repetition of deviant acts. At that point they precede the future commission of the acts.

Differential association with conforming and non-conforming others typically precedes the individual's committing the acts. Families are included in the differential association process, and it is obvious that association, reinforcement of conforming or deviant behavior, deviant or conforming modeling, and exposure to definitions favorable or unfavorable to deviance occurs within the family prior to the onset of delinquency. On the other hand, it can never be true that the onset of delinquency initiates interaction in the family (except in the unlikely case of the late-stage adoption of a child who is already delinquent who is drawn to and chosen by deviant parents). This is also hypothesized as the typical process within peer groups. While one may be attracted to deviant peer groups prior to becoming involved in delinquency, associations with peers and others are most often formed initially around attractions, friendships, and circumstances, such as neighborhood proximity, that have little to do directly with co-involvement in some deviant behavior. However, after the associations have been established and the reinforcing or punishing consequences of the deviant behavior are experienced, both the continuation of old and the seeking of new associations (over which one has any choice) will themselves be affected. One may choose further interaction with others based, in part, on whether they too are involved in similar deviant or criminal behavior. But the theory proposes that the sequence of events, in which deviant associations precede the onset of delinquent behavior, will occur more frequently than the sequence of events in which the onset of delinquency precedes the beginning of deviant associations.

Social Structure and Social Learning

Akers has proposed a SSSL (social structure and social learning) model in which social structural factors are hypothesized to have an indirect effect on the individual's conduct. They affect the social learning variables of differential association, differential reinforcement, definitions, and imitation which, in turn, have a direct impact on the individual's conduct. The social learning variables are proposed as the main ones in the process by which various aspects of the social structure influence individual behavior (see Figure 9.1).

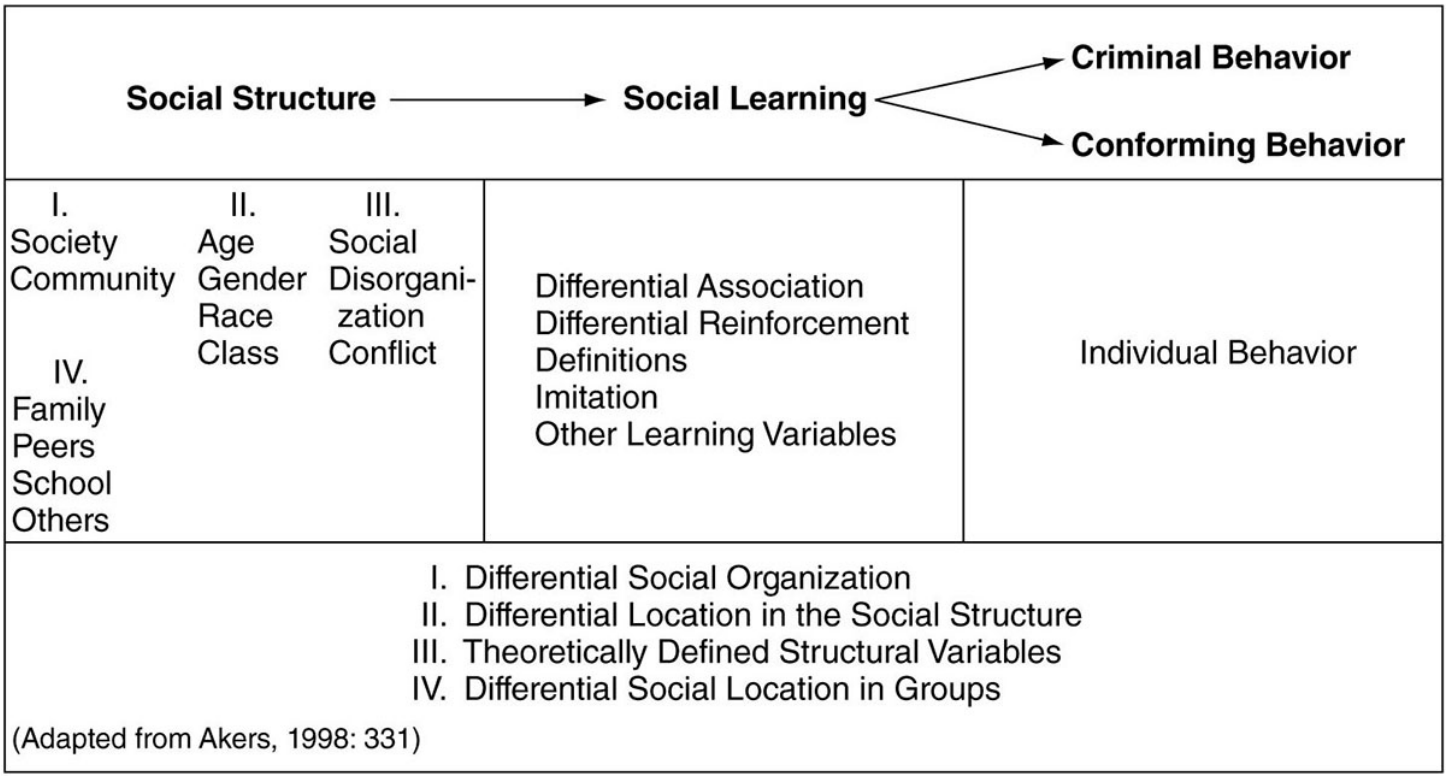


FIGURE 9.1 Social Structure and Social Learning

> The social structural variables are indicators of the primary distal macro-level and meso-level causes of crime, while the social learning variables reflect the primary proximate causes of criminal behavior that mediate the relationship between social structure and crime rates. Some structural variables are not related to crime and do not explain the crime rate because they do not have a crime-relevant effect on the social learning variables. (Akers, 1998: 322)

As shown in Figure 9.1, Akers (1998) identifies four dimensions of social structure that provide the contexts within which social learning variables operate:

(I) *Differential Social Organization* refers to the structural correlates of crime in the community or society that affect the rates of crime and delinquency including age composition, population density, and other attributes that lean societies, communities, and other social systems "toward relatively high or relatively low crime rates" (Akers, 1998: 332).

(II) *Differential Location in the Social Structure* refers to sociodemographic characteristics of individuals and social groups that indicate their niches within the larger social structure. Class, gender, race and ethnicity, marital status, and age locate the positions and standing of persons and their roles, groups, or social categories in the overall social structure.

(III) *Theoretically Defined Structural Variables* refer to anomie, class oppression, social disorganization, group conflict, patriarchy, and other concepts that have been used in one or more theories to identify criminogenic conditions of societies, communities, or groups.

(IV) *Differential Social Location* refers to individuals' membership in and relationship to primary, secondary, and reference groups such as the family, friendship/peer groups, leisure groups, colleagues, and work groups.

The differential social organization of society and community, as well as the differential location of persons in the social class, race, gender, religion, and other structures in society, provides the general learning contexts for individuals that increase or decrease the likelihood of their committing crime. The differential location in family, peer, school, church, and other groups provides the more immediate contexts that promote or discourage the criminal behavior of the individual. Differences in the societal or group rates of criminal behavior are a function of the extent to which their cultural traditions, norms, and social control systems provide socialization, learning environments, and immediate situations conducive to conformity or deviance. The structural conditions identified in macro-level theories can affect one's exposure to criminal associations, models, definitions, and reinforcement to induce or retard criminal actions in individuals. It is possible, therefore, to integrate these structural theories with social learning. Although this has not yet been accomplished, the SSSL model is a step in that direction.

Empirical Validity of Social Learning Theory

Critiques and Research on Social Learning Variables

The testability of the basic behavioral learning principles incorporated in social learning theory has been challenged because they may be tautological. The way in which the principle of reinforcement is often stated by behavioral psychologists makes the proposition true by definition. That is, they define reinforcement by stating that it occurs when behavior has been strengthened, that is, its rate of commission has been increased. If reinforcement is defined this way, then the statement "If behavior is reinforced, it will be strengthened" is tautological. If reinforcement means that behavior has been strengthened, then the hypothesis states simply, "If behavior is reinforced, it is reinforced." If the behavior is not strengthened, then by definition it has not been reinforced; therefore, no instance of behavior that is not being strengthened can be used to falsify the hypothesis.

Another criticism of social learning has to do with the temporal sequence of differential peer association and delinquency. Some have argued that youths become delinquent first then seek out other delinquent youths. Rather than delinquent associations causing delinquency, delinquency causes delinquent associations. If there is a relationship between one's own delinquency and one's association with delinquent peers, then it is simply a case of "birds of a feather flocking together" rather than a bird joining a flock and changing its feathers. Differential peer associations with delinquent friends is almost always a consequence rather than a cause of one's own behavior. Association with delinquent peers takes place only or mainly after peers have already independently established patterns of delinquent involvement. No deviance-relevant learning takes place in peer groups. From this point of view, any association with delinquent youths has no direct effect on an adolescent's delinquent behavior. Therefore, association with delinquent friends has an effect on neither the onset nor acceleration, the continuation nor cessation, of delinquent behavior (Hirschi, 1969; Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; Sampson and Laub, 1993).

These criticisms, however, may be off the mark. Burgess and Akers (1966a) identified this tautology problem and offered one solution to it. They separated the definitions of reinforcement and other behavioral concepts from non-tautological, testable propositions in social learning theory and proposed criteria for falsifying those propositions. Others as well have proposed somewhat different solutions (Liska, 1969; Chadwick-Jones, 1976). Moreover, the variables in the process of reinforcement are always measured separately (and hence non-tautologically) from measures of crime and deviance in research on social learning theory. The theory would be falsified if it is typically the case that positive social approval or other rewards for delinquency (that are not offset by punishment) more often reduce than increase its recurrence. Also, as shown above, feedback effects are built into the reinforcement concept with both prior and anticipated reward/punishment influencing present behavior.

Furthermore, the reciprocal relationship between one's own conduct and one's definitions and association with friends is clearly recognized in social learning theory. Therefore, the fact that delinquent behavior may precede the association with delinquent peers does not contradict this theory. "Social learning admits that birds of a feather do flock together, but it also admits that if the birds are humans, they also will influence one another's behavior, in both conforming and deviant directions" (Akers, 1991: 210). It would contradict the theory if research demonstrated that the onset of delinquency always or most often predates interaction with peers who have engaged in delinquent acts and/or have adhered to delinquency-favorable definitions. It would not support the theory if the research evidence showed that whatever level of delinquent behavioral involvement preceded association with delinquent peers stayed

the same or decreased rather than increased after the association. Research has not yet found this to be the case. Instead, the findings from several studies favor the process proposed by social learning theory, which recognizes both direct and reciprocal effects. That is, a youngster associates differentially with peers who are deviant or tolerant of deviance, learns definitions favorable to delinquent behavior, is exposed to deviant models that reinforce delinquency, then initiates or increases involvement in that behavior, which then is expected to influence further associations and definitions (Kandel, 1978; Andrews and Kandel, 1979; Krohn et al., 1985; Sellers and Winfree, 1990; Empey and Stafford, 1991; Elliott and Menard, 1991; 1996; Kandel and Davies, 1991; Warr, 1993b; Esbensen and Huizinga, 1993; Thornberry et al., 1994; Menard and Elliott, 1994; Winfree et al., 1994a; Akers and Lee, 1996; Esbensen and Deschenes, 1998; Battin et al., 1998).

Kandel and Davies (1991: 442) note that

> although assortive pairing plays a role in similarity among friends observed at a single point in time, longitudinal research that we and others have carried out clearly documents the etiological importance of peers in the initiation and persistence of substance use.

Warr (1993b) also refers to the considerable amount of research evidence showing that peer associations precede the development of deviant patterns (or increase the frequency and seriousness of deviant behavior once it has begun) more often than involvement in deviant behavior precedes associations with deviant peers. The reverse sequence also occurs and Warr proposes that the process is

> … a more complex, sequential, reciprocal process: Adolescents are commonly introduced to delinquency by their friends and subsequently become more selective in their choices of friends. The "feathering" and "flocking" … are not mutually exclusive and may instead be part of a unified process. (Warr, 1993b: 39)

This is, of course, completely consistent with the sequential and feedback effects in the social learning process spelled out above. Menard and Elliott (1990; 1994; Elliott and Menard, 1996) also support the process as predicted by social learning theory. Reciprocal effects were found in their research, but:

> [I]n the typical sequence of initiation of delinquent bonding and illegal behavior, delinquent bonding (again, more specifically, association with delinquent friends) usually precedes illegal behavior for those individuals for whom one can ascertain the temporal order…. [S]imilarly … weakening of belief typically preceded the initiation of illegal behavior. (Elliott and Menard, 1994: 174)
>
> These results are strong enough to indicate that serious forms of delinquent behavior such as index offending rarely, if ever, precede exposure to delinquent friends. Instead, in the vast majority of cases, exposure precedes index offending. (Elliott and Menard, 1996: 43)
>
> We were *not* able to reject the learning theory hypothesis that the onset of exposure to delinquent others typically precedes the onset of delinquent behavior. Instead, we found that exposure to delinquent peers preceded minor delinquent behavior in a majority of cases, and serious delinquency in nearly all cases where some order could be determined…. Having delinquent friends and being involved in delinquent behavior may influence one another, but the influence is not symmetric; the influence of exposure on delinquency begins earlier in the sequence, and remains stronger throughout the sequence, than the influence of delinquency on exposure. (Elliott and Menard, 1996: 61–62)

The preponderance of findings thus far shows a stronger effect of peer associations on the individual's delinquent behavior. However, some research finds stronger effects running in the other direction and some shows the relationship to be about equal depending on the measures and methods employed (Kandel, 1996; Krohn et al., 1996; Matsueda and Anderson, 1998).

Another criticism of the theory is that the strong relationship between self-reported delinquency and peer associations is entirely due to the fact that associations are often measured by the individual's report of the delinquency of his or her peers; they are the same thing measured twice. One is measuring the same underlying delinquent tendency, whether youngsters are asked about the delinquency of their friends or about their own delinquency. But research shows that the two are not the same and that the respondent's reports of friends' behavior

is not simply a reflection of one's own delinquent behavior (Menard and Elliott, 1990; 1991; Agnew, 1991b; Warr, 1993b; Thornberry et al., 1994; Elliott and Menard, 1996; Bartusch et al., 1997).

Almost all research conducted on social learning theory has found strong relationships in the theoretically expected direction between social learning variables and criminal, delinquent, and deviant behavior. When social learning theory is tested against other theories using the same data collected from the same samples, it is usually found to account for more variance in the dependent variables or have greater support than the theories with which it is being compared (for instance, see Akers and Cochran, 1985; Matsueda and Heimer, 1987; White et al., 1986; Kandel and Davies, 1991; McGee, 1992; Benda, 1994; Burton et al., 1994). When social learning variables are included in integrated or combined models that incorporate variables from different theories, it is the measures of social learning concepts that have the strongest main and net effects (Elliott et al., 1985; Kaplan et al., 1987; Thornberry et al., 1994; Kaplan, 1996; Catalano et al., 1996).

There is abundant evidence to show the significant impact on criminal and deviant behavior of differential association in primary groups such as family and peers. The role of the family is usually as a conventional socializer against delinquency and crime. It provides anti-criminal definitions, conforming models, and the reinforcement of conformity through parental discipline; it promotes the development of self-control. But deviant behavior may be the outcome of internal family interaction (McCord, 1991b). It is directly affected by deviant parental models, ineffective and erratic parental supervision and discipline in the use of positive and negative sanctions, and the endorsement of values and attitudes favorable to deviance. Patterson has shown that the operation of social learning mechanisms in parent-child interaction is a strong predictor of conforming/deviant behavior (Patterson, 1975; 1995; Snyder and Patterson, 1995). Ineffective disciplinary strategies by parents increase the chances that a child will learn behavior in the early years that is a precursor to his or her later delinquency. Children learn conforming responses when parents consistently make use of positive reward for proper behavior and impose moderately negative consequences for misbehavior (Capaldi et al., 1997). In some cases, parents directly train their children to commit deviant behavior (Adler and Adler, 1978). And in general, parental deviance and criminality is predictive of the children's future delinquency and crime (McCord, 1991a). Moreover, youngsters with delinquent siblings in the family are more likely to be delinquent, even when parental and other family characteristics are taken into account (Rowe and Gulley, 1992; Lauritsen, 1993; Rowe and Farrington, 1997).

Delinquent tendencies learned in the family may be exacerbated by differential peer association (Simons et al., 1994; Lauritsen, 1993). Other than one's own prior deviant behavior, the best single predictor of the onset, continuance, or desistance of crime and delinquency is differential association with conforming or law-violating peers (Loeber and Dishion, 1987; Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986). More frequent, longer-term, and closer association with peers who do not support deviant behavior is strongly correlated with conformity, while greater association with peers who commit and approve of delinquency is predictive of one's own delinquent behavior. It is in peer groups that the first availability and opportunity for delinquent acts are typically provided. Virtually every study that includes a peer association variable finds it to be significantly and usually most strongly related to delinquency, alcohol and drug use and abuse, adult crime, and other forms of deviant behavior. There is a sizable body of research literature that shows the importance of differential associations and definitions in explaining crime and delinquency. The impact of differential peer association on delinquent behavior is among the most fully substantiated and replicated findings in criminology. Only the well-known relationships of crime rates to basic sociodemographic variables like age and sex are as consistently reported in the literature.

One special context of peer association is participation in delinquent gangs. Delinquent gangs and subcultures have received a great deal of attention in criminology for a long time. And research continues to find the strong influence of gang membership on serious delinquency. Battin et al. (1998) found that, controlling for prior delinquency,

adolescents with delinquent friends are more likely to engage in delinquent conduct and come before the juvenile court on delinquency charges, even if they are not part of a gang. But they are even more likely to do so if they and their friends are members of an identified delinquent gang. Whatever the frequency and seriousness of one's previous delinquency, joining a gang promotes an even higher level of his or her delinquent involvement, in large part because

> group processes and norms favorable to violence and other delinquency within gangs subsequently encourage and reinforce participation in violent and delinquent behavior. (Battin et al., 1998: 108)

These findings suggest that, compared to having one or more non-gang delinquent friends, gang membership produces more frequent, intense, and enduring association with delinquent friends, exposure to delinquent models and definitions, and reinforcement for delinquent behavior. Other research from the GREAT (Gang Resistance Education And Training) project by Winfree et al. (1994a; 1994b) shows that both gang membership itself and delinquency (gang-related as well as non-gang delinquency) are explained by social learning variables (attitudes, social reinforcers/punishers, and differential association). This is true even controlling for "personal-biographical characteristics, including ethnicity, gender, and place of residence" (Winfree et al., 1994a: 167). The processes specified in social learning theory are

> nearly identical to those provided by qualitative gang research. Gang members reward certain behavior in their peers and punish others, employing goals and processes that are indistinguishable from those described by Akers. (Winfree et al., 1994a: 149)

Later research from the GREAT project by Esbensen and Deschenes (1998) found that while neither is especially strong, social learning models do a better job than social bonding models of distinguishing between gang and non-gang members among both boys and girls in the eighth grade.

Many studies using direct measures of one or more of the social learning variables of differential association, imitation, definitions, and differential reinforcement find that the theory's hypotheses are upheld (Elliott et al., 1985; Dembo et al., 1986; White et al., 1986; Sellers and Winfree, 1990; McGee, 1992; Winfree et al., 1993; 1994a; 1994b; Mihalic and Elliott, 1997; Skinner and Fream, 1997; Esbensen and Deschenes, 1998). The relationships between the social learning variables and delinquent, criminal, and deviant behavior found in the research are typically strong to moderate, and there has been very little negative evidence reported in the literature.

Akers' Research on Social Learning Theory

In addition to the consistently positive findings by other researchers, support for the theory comes from research conducted by Akers and his associates in which all of the key social learning variables are measured (Akers, 1998). These include tests of social learning theory by itself and tests that directly compare its empirical validity with other theories. The first of these, conducted with Marvin D. Krohn, Lonn Lanza-Kaduce, and Marcia J. Radosevich, was a self-report questionnaire survey of adolescent substance abuse involving 3,000 students in grades 7 through 12 in eight communities in three Midwestern states (Akers et al., 1979; Krohn et al., 1982; Krohn et al., 1984; Lanza-Kaduce et al., 1984; Akers and Cochran, 1985; Akers and Lee, 1999). The second, conducted with Marvin Krohn, Ronald Lauer, James Massey, William Skinner, and Sherilyn Spear, was a five-year longitudinal study of smoking among 2,000 students in junior and senior high school in one midwest community (Lauer et al., 1982; Krohn et al., 1985; Spear and Akers 1998; Akers, 1992a; Akers and Lee, 1996). The third project, conducted with Anthony La Greca, John Cochran, and Christine Sellers, was a four-year longitudinal study of conforming and deviant drinking among elderly populations (1,400 respondents) in four communities in Florida and New Jersey (Akers et al., 1989; Akers and La Greca, 1991; Akers, 1992a). The fourth and fifth studies were the master's and doctoral research of Scot Boeringer, conducted under Akers' supervision, on rape and sexual coercion among samples of 200 and 500 college

males (Boeringer et al., 1991; Boeringer, 1992). The dependent variables in these studies ranged from minor deviance to serious criminal behavior.

The findings in each of these studies demonstrated that the social learning variables of differential association, differential reinforcement, imitation, and definitions, singly and in combination, are strongly related to the various forms of deviant, delinquent, and criminal behavior studied. The social learning model produced high levels of explained variance, much more than other theoretical models with which it was compared.

The combined effects of the social learning variables on adolescent alcohol and drug use and abuse are very strong. High amounts (from 31 to 68 percent) of the variance in these variables are accounted for by the social learning variables. Social bonding models account for about 15 percent and anomie models account for less than 5 percent of the variance.

Similarly, adolescent cigarette smoking is highly correlated with the social learning variables. These variables also predict quite well the maintenance of smoking over a three-year period. They fare less well, however, when predicting which of the initially abstinent youngsters will begin smoking in that same period. The social learning variables do a slightly better job of predicting the onset of smoking over a five-year period. The sequencing and reciprocal effects of social learning variables and smoking behavior over the five-year period are as predicted by the theory. The onset, frequency, and quantity of elderly drinking is highly correlated with social learning, and the theory also successfully accounts for problem drinking among the elderly.

The social learning variables of association, reinforcement, definitions, and imitation explain the self-perceived likelihood of using force to gain sexual contact or committing rape by college men (55 percent explained variance). They also account for the actual use of drugs or alcohol, non-physical coercion, and physical force by males to obtain sex (20 percent explained variance). Social bonding, self-control, and relative deprivation (strain) models account for less than 10 percent of the variance in these variables.

The research by Akers and others has also included some evidence on the hypothesized relationship between social structure and social learning. This research has found that the correlations of adolescent drug use and smoking, elderly alcohol abuse, and rape to socio-demographic variables of age, sex, race, and class are reduced toward zero when the social learning variables are taken into account. Also, differences in levels of marijuana and alcohol use among adolescents in four types of communities (farm, rural-non-farm, suburban, and urban), and the differences in overall levels of drinking behavior among the elderly in four types of communities, are mediated by the social learning process. These and other findings from other research show some support for the SSSL theory (Warr, 1998; Mears et al., 1998; Akers and Lee, 1999). However, at this time there has not been enough research to confirm that social learning is the principal process mediating the relationship of social structure and crime as expected by the theory.

Summary

Akers' social learning theory combines Sutherland's original differential association theory of criminal behavior with general behavioral learning principles. The theory proposes that criminal and delinquent behavior is acquired, repeated, and changed by the same process as conforming behavior. While referring to all parts of the learning process, Akers's social learning theory in criminology has focused on the four major concepts of differential association, definitions, differential reinforcement, and imitation. That process will more likely produce behavior that violates social and legal norms than conforming behavior when persons differentially associate with those who expose them to deviant patterns, when the deviant behavior is differentially reinforced over conforming behavior, when individuals are more exposed to deviant than conforming models, and when their own definitions favorably dispose them to commit deviant acts.

This social learning explanation of crime and delinquency has been strongly supported by the research evidence. Research conducted over many years, including that by Akers and associates, has consistently found that social learning is empirically supported as an explanation of individual differences in delinquent and criminal behavior. The hypothesis that social learning processes mediate the effects of socio-demographic and community variables on behavior has been infrequently studied, but the evidence so far suggests that it will also be upheld.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Many data indicate that associating with delinquents increases one's own level of delinquency. According to social learning theory, why might this be so?
2. Drawing on social learning theory, describe and give an example of the major types of "definitions" favorable to crime.
3. How does positive reinforcement differ from negative reinforcement?
4. Describe the social learning *process*—note how this process changes after the initiation into deviance and describe the feedback effects in this process.
5. How might Akers explain the fact that males have higher rates of crime than females?

10.
The Code of the Street*

Elijah Anderson

In this selection, Anderson provides a contemporary account of a "subculture of violence." Drawing on his field research in inner-city communities (e.g., *Anderson, 1990*, *1999*), *he argues that there exists a "code of the street" in poor, inner-city African American communities. While most people do not accept the values underlying this code, the code places all young African American men under much pressure to respond to certain situations—shows of disrespect—with violence.*

Anderson's account is perhaps the best description of a subculture of violence now available, and it is important because it makes us aware of the complexity of this subculture. While most people are opposed to the subculture, the subculture nevertheless shapes the behavior of most community residents. Further, the influence of the subculture is pervasive, affecting one's behavior in a wide range of situations and most especially affecting how one interprets and responds to challenges. Anderson's description of the socialization of "street kids"—those most immersed in the subculture—is especially compelling and sheds much light on the violent behavior of such youths.

It should be noted, however, that much data suggests that blacks are no more likely than whites to endorse values that justify or approve of violence (e.g., Brezina et al., 2004; *Cao et al., 1997*). *One study, however, found that values favorable to violence are more common in disadvantaged neighborhoods (Sampson and Bartusch, 1999; see also Berg and Stewart, 2013*). *Anderson limited his study to a largely black, inner-city community, but the "code of the street" may also be present in disadvantaged Latino and white communities (whites, however, are much less likely than blacks to live in disadvantaged communities). The code, then, may be more a function of neighborhood disadvantage than of race.*

Anderson argues that the threat of violence is high in many disadvantaged communities and that it is often the case that one cannot count on the police for protection. In such circumstances, some individuals follow the code to discourage others from victimizing them. That is, individuals act "tough" and respond to disrespectful treatment with violence as a way of letting others know that they are not to be "messed with." Stewart et al. (2006), however, found that individuals who followed the code were more likely to be victimized, even after taking account of such things as their past history of victimization and the level of violence in their community (also see McNeeley and Wilcox, 2015). *There are a few possible reasons for this; most notably, people who follow the code may be more likely to engage in behaviors that provoke others (see Stewart et al., 2006*). *The code of the street, then, may partly arise out of a desire to protect oneself in a dangerous environment, but it does not appear to serve this function.*

Data suggest that certain of the other factors discussed by Anderson also contribute to the adoption of the code. In particular, individuals are more likely to adopt the code if they are male, poor, are poorly supervised and harshly disciplined by parents, believe their opportunities for success are limited, have experienced discrimination, have been the victims of violence, have engaged in violence, and—especially—associate with violent peers (see especially Baron et al., 2001; *Berg et al., 2020*; *Brezina et al., 2004*; *Heimer and De Coster, 1999*; *Intravia et al., 2014*;

Markowitz and Felson, 1998; *Matsuda et al., 2013*; *Mullins, 2006*; *Stewart and Simons, 2006*; *Swartz, 2010*; *Wilkinson, 2003*).

References

Anderson, Elijah. 1990. *Streetwise*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

____. 1999. *Code of the Street*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Baron, Stephen W., Leslie W. Kennedy, and David R. Forde. 2001. "Male Street Youths' Conflict: The Role of Background, Subcultural, and Situational Factors." *Justice Quarterly* **18**: 759–789.

Berg, Mark T., Man-Kit Lei, and Ronald L. Simons. 2020. "Socially Demoralizing Environments and the Development of the Street Code from Childhood to Emerging Adulthood." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **36**: 207–233.

Berg, Mark T. and Eric A. Stewart. 2013. "Street Culture and Crime." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 370–388. New York: Oxford University Press.

Brezina, Timothy, Robert Agnew, Francis T. Cullen, and John Paul Wright. 2004. "The Code of the Street." *Youth Violence and Culture* **2**: 303–328.

Cao, Liqun, Anthony Adams, and Vickie J. Jensen. 1997. "A Test of the Black Subculture of Violence Thesis: A Research Note." *Criminology* **35**: 367–379.

Heimer, Karen and Stacy De Coster. 1999. "The Gendering of Violent Delinquency." *Criminology* **37**: 277–312.

Intravia, Jonathan, Kevin T. Wolff, Eric A. Stewart, and Ronald L. Simons. 2014. "Neighborhood-level Differences in Police Discrimination and Subcultural Violence: A Multilevel Examination of Adopting the Code of the Street." *Journal of Crime & Justice* **37**(1): 42–60.

Markowitz, Fred E. and Richard B. Felson. 1998. "Socio-Demographic Differences in Attitudes and Violence." *Criminology* **36**: 117–138.

Matsuda, Kristy N., Chris Melde, Terrance J. Taylor, Adrienne Freng, and Finn-Aage Esbensen. 2013. "Gang Membership and Adherence to the 'Code of the Street.'" *Justice Quarterly* **30**(3): 440–468.

McNeeley, Susan and Pamela Wilcox. 2015. "The Code of the Street and Violent Versus Property Victimization." *Violence & Victims* **30**(6): 1049–1067.

Mullins, Christopher W. 2006. *Holding Your Square: Masculinities, Streetlife, and Violence*. Portland, OR: Willan.

Sampson, Robert J. and Dawn Jeglum Bartusch. 1999. *Attitudes Toward Crime, Police, and the Law: Individual and Neighborhood Differences*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice.

Stewart, Eric A., Christopher J. Schreck, and Ronald L. Simons. 2006. "'I Ain't Gonna Let No One Disrepect Me': Does the Code of the Street Reduce or Increase Violent Victimization Among African American Adolescents?" *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **43**: 427–458.

Stewart, Eric A. and Ronald L. Simons. 2006. "Structure and Culture in African American Adolescent Violence: A Partial Test of the 'Code of the Street' Thesis." *Justice Quarterly* **23**: 1–33.

Swartz, Kristin. 2010. "Anderson, Elijah: Code of the Street." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*, pp. 46–51. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Wilkinson, Deanna L. 2003. *Guns, Violence, and Identity Among African American and Latino Youth*. New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing.

Of all the problems besetting the poor inner-city black community, none is more pressing than that of interpersonal violence and aggression. It wreaks havoc daily with the lives of community residents and increasingly spills over into downtown and residential middle-class areas. Muggings, burglaries, carjackings, and drug-related shootings, all of which may leave their victims or innocent bystanders dead, are now common enough to concern all urban and many suburban residents. The inclination to violence springs from the circumstances of life among the ghetto poor—the lack of jobs that pay a living wage, the stigma of race, the fallout from rampant drug use and drug trafficking, and the resulting alienation and lack of hope for the future.

Simply living in such an environment places young people at special risk of falling victim to aggressive behavior. Although there are often forces in the community which can counteract the negative influences, by far the most powerful being a strong, loving, "decent" (as inner-city residents put it) family committed to middle-class values, the despair is pervasive enough to have spawned an oppositional culture, that of "the streets," whose norms are often consciously opposed to those of mainstream society. These two orientations—decent and street—socially organize the community, and their coexistence has important consequences for residents, particularly children growing up in the inner city. Above all, this environment means that even youngsters whose home lives reflect mainstream values—and the majority of homes in the community do—must be able to handle themselves in a street-oriented environment.

This is because the street culture has evolved what may be called a code of the streets, which amounts to a set of informal rules governing interpersonal public behavior, including violence. The rules prescribe both a proper comportment and a proper way to respond if challenged. They regulate the use of violence and so allow those who are inclined to aggression to precipitate violent encounters in an approved way. The rules have been established and are enforced mainly by the street-oriented, but on the streets the distinction between street and decent is often irrelevant; everybody knows that if the rules are violated, there are penalties. Knowledge of the code is thus largely defensive; it is literally necessary for operating in public. Therefore, even though families with a decency orientation are usually opposed to the values of the code, they often reluctantly encourage their children's familiarity with it to enable them to negotiate the inner-city environment.

At the heart of the code is the issue of respect—loosely defined as being treated "right," or granted the deference one deserves. However, in the troublesome public environment of the inner city, as people increasingly feel buffeted by forces beyond their control, what one deserves in the way of respect becomes more and more problematic and uncertain. This in turn further opens the issue of respect to sometimes intense interpersonal negotiation. In the street culture, especially among young people, respect is viewed as almost an external entity that is hard-won but easily lost, and so must constantly be guarded. The rules of the code in fact provide a framework for negotiating respect. The person whose very appearance—including his clothing, demeanor, and way of moving—deters transgressions feels that he possesses, and may be considered by others to possess, a measure of respect. With the right amount of respect, for instance, he can avoid "being bothered" in public. If he is bothered, not only may he be in physical danger but he has been disgraced or "dissed" (disrespected). Many of the forms that dissing can take might seem petty to middle-class people (maintaining eye contact for too long, for example), but to those invested in the street code, these actions become serious indications of the other person's intentions. Consequently, such people become very sensitive to advances and slights, which could well serve as warnings of imminent physical confrontation.

This hard reality can be traced to the profound sense of alienation from mainstream society and its institutions felt by many poor inner-city black people, particularly the young. The code of the streets is actually a cultural adaptation to a profound lack of faith in the police and the judicial system. The police are most often seen as representing the dominant white society and not caring to protect inner-city residents. When called, they may not respond, which is one reason many residents feel they must be prepared to take extraordinary measures to defend themselves and their

loved ones against those who are inclined to aggression. Lack of police accountability has in fact been incorporated into the status system: the person who is believed capable of "taking care of himself" is accorded a certain deference, which translates into a sense of physical and psychological control. Thus the street code emerges where the influence of the police ends and personal responsibility for one's safety is felt to begin. Exacerbated by the proliferation of drugs and easy access to guns, this volatile situation results in the ability of the street-oriented minority (or those who effectively "go for bad") to dominate the public spaces.

---

* Republished with permission of The Atlantic Monthly Group, Inc., from "The Code of the Street," Elijah Anderson, 273, 5, 1994; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

Decent and Street Families

Although almost everyone in poor inner-city neighborhoods is struggling financially and therefore feels a certain distance from the rest of America, the decent and the street family in a real sense represent two poles of value orientation, two contrasting conceptual categories. The labels “decent” and “street,” which the residents themselves use, amount to evaluative judgments that confer status on local residents. The labeling is often the result of a social contest among individuals and families of the neighborhood. Individuals of the two orientations often coexist in the same extended family. Decent residents judge themselves to be so while judging others to be of the street, and street individuals often present themselves as decent, drawing distinctions between themselves and other people. In addition, there is quite a bit of circumstantial behavior—that is, one person may at different times exhibit both decent and street orientations, depending on the circumstances. Although these designations result from so much social jockeying, there do exist concrete features that define each conceptual category.

Generally, so-called decent families tend to accept mainstream values more fully and attempt to instill them in their children. Whether married couples with children or single-parent (usually female) households, they are generally “working poor” and so tend to be better off financially than their street-oriented neighbors. They value hard work and self-reliance and are willing to sacrifice for their children. Because they have a certain amount of faith in mainstream society, they harbor hopes for a better future for their children, if not for themselves. Many of them go to church and take a strong interest in their children’s schooling. Rather than dwelling on the real hardships and inequities facing them, many such decent people, particularly the increasing number of grandmothers raising grandchildren, see their difficult situation as a test from God and derive great support from their faith and from the church community.

Extremely aware of the problematic and often dangerous environment in which they reside, decent parents tend to be strict in their child-rearing practices, encouraging children to respect authority and walk a straight moral line. They have an almost obsessive concern about trouble of any kind and remind their children to be on the lookout for people and situations that might lead to it. At the same time, they are themselves polite and considerate of others, and teach their children to be the same way. At home, at work, and in church, they strive hard to maintain a positive mental attitude and a spirit of cooperation.

So-called street parents, in contrast, often show a lack of consideration for other people and have a rather superficial sense of family and community. Though they may love their children, many of them are unable to cope with the physical and emotional demands of parenthood, and find it difficult to reconcile their needs with those of their children. These families, who are more fully invested in the code of the streets than the decent people are, may aggressively socialize their children into it in a normative way. They believe in the code and judge themselves and others according to its values.

In fact the overwhelming majority of families in the inner-city community try to approximate the decent-family model, but there are many others who clearly represent the worst fears of the decent family. Not only are their financial resources extremely limited, but what little they have may easily be misused. The lives of the street-oriented are often marked by disorganization. In the most desperate circumstances people frequently have a limited understanding of priorities and consequences, and so frustrations mount over bills, food, and at times, drink, cigarettes, and drugs. Some tend toward self-destructive behavior; many street-oriented women are crack-addicted (“on the pipe”), alcoholic, or involved in complicated relationships with men who abuse them. In addition, the

seeming intractability of their situation, caused in large part by the lack of well-paying jobs and the persistence of racial discrimination, has engendered deep-seated bitterness and anger in many of the most desperate and poorest blacks, especially young people. The need both to exercise a measure of control and to lash out at somebody is often reflected in the adults' relations with their children. At the least, the frustrations of persistent poverty shorten the fuse in such people contributing to a lack of patience with anyone, child or adult, who irritates them.

In these circumstances a woman—or a man, although men are less consistently present in children's lives—can be quite aggressive with children, yelling at and striking them for the least little infraction of the rules she has set down. Often little if any serious explanation follows the verbal and physical punishment. This response teaches children a particular lesson. They learn that to solve any kind of interpersonal problem one must quickly resort to hitting or other violent behavior. Actual peace and quiet, and also the appearance of calm, respectful children conveyed to her neighbors and friends, are often what the young mother most desires, but at times she will be very aggressive in trying to get them. Thus she may be quick to beat her children, especially if they defy her law, not because she hates them but because this is the way she knows to control them. In fact, many street-oriented women love their children dearly. Many mothers in the community subscribe to the notion that there is a "devil in the boy" that must be beaten out of him or that socially "fast girls need to be whupped." Thus much of what borders on child abuse in the view of social authorities is acceptable parental punishment in the view of these mothers.

Many street-oriented women are sporadic mothers whose children learn to fend for themselves when necessary, foraging for food and money any way they can get it. The children are sometimes employed by drug dealers or become addicted themselves. These children of the street, growing up with little supervision, are said to "come up hard." They often learn to fight at an early age, sometimes using short-tempered adults around them as role models. The street-oriented home may be fraught with anger, verbal disputes, physical aggression, and even mayhem. The children observe these goings-on, learning the lesson that might makes right. They quickly learn to hit those who cross them, and the dog-eat-dog mentality prevails. In order to survive, to protect oneself, it is necessary to marshal inner resources and be ready to deal with adversity in a hands-on way. In these circumstances physical prowess takes on great significance.

In some of the most desperate cases, a street-oriented mother may simply leave her young children alone and unattended while she goes out. The most irresponsible women can be found at local bars and crack houses, getting high and socializing with other adults. Sometimes a troubled woman will leave very young children alone for days at a time. Reports of crack addicts abandoning their children have become common in drug-infested inner-city communities. Neighbors or relatives discover the abandoned children, often hungry and distraught over the absence of their mother. After repeated absences, a friend or relative, particularly a grandmother, will often step in to care for the young children, sometimes petitioning the authorities to send her, as guardian of the children, the mother's welfare check, if the mother gets one. By this time, however, the children may well have learned the first lesson of the streets: survival itself, let alone respect, cannot be taken for granted; you have to fight for your place in the world.

Campaigning for Respect

These realities of inner-city life are largely absorbed on the streets. At an early age, often even before they start school, children from street-oriented homes gravitate to the streets, where they "hang"—socialize with their peers. Children from these generally permissive homes have a great deal of latitude and are allowed to "rip and run" up and down the street. They often come home from school, put their books down, and go right back out the door. On school nights eight- and nine-year-olds remain out until nine or ten o'clock (and teenagers typically come in whenever they want to). On the streets they play in groups that often become the source of their primary social bonds. Children from decent homes tend to be more carefully supervised and are thus likely to have curfews and to be taught how to stay out of trouble.

When decent and street kids come together, a kind of social shuffle occurs in which children have a chance to go either way. Tension builds as a child comes to realize that he must choose an orientation. The kind of home he comes from influences but does not determine the way he will ultimately turn out—although it is unlikely that a child from a thoroughly street-oriented family will easily absorb decent values on the streets. Youths who emerge from street-oriented families but develop a decency orientation almost always learn those values in another setting—in school, in a youth group, in church. Often it is the result of their involvement with a caring "old head" (adult role model).

In the street, through their play, children pour their individual life experiences into a common knowledge pool, affirming, confirming, and elaborating on what they have observed in the home and matching their skills against those of others. And they learn to fight. Even small children test one another, pushing and shoving, and are ready to hit other children over circumstances not to their liking. In turn, they are readily hit by other children, and the child who is toughest prevails. Thus the violent resolution of disputes, the hitting and cursing, gains social reinforcement. The child in effect is initiated into a system that is really a way of campaigning for respect.

In addition, younger children witness the disputes of older children, which are often resolved through cursing and abusive talk, if not aggression or outright violence. They see that one child succumbs to the greater physical and mental abilities of the other. They are also alert and attentive witnesses to the verbal and physical fights of adults, after which they compare notes and share their interpretations of the event. In almost every case the victor is the person who physically won the altercation, and this person often enjoys the esteem and respect of onlookers. These experiences reinforce the lessons the children have learned at home: might makes right, and toughness is a virtue, while humility is not. In effect they learn the social meaning of fighting. When it is left virtually unchallenged, this understanding becomes an ever more important part of the child's working conception of the world. Over time the code of the streets becomes refined.

Those street-oriented adults with whom children come in contact—including mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, boyfriends, cousins, neighbors, and friends—help them along in forming this understanding by verbalizing the messages they are getting through experience: "Watch your back." "Protect yourself." "Don't punk out." "If somebody messes with you, you got to pay them back." "If someone disses you, you got to straighten them out." Many parents actually impose sanctions if a child is not sufficiently aggressive. For example, if a child loses a fight and comes home upset, the parent might respond,

> Don't you come in here crying that somebody beat you up; you better get back out there and whup his ass. I didn't raise no punks! Get back out there and whup his ass. If you don't whup his ass, I'll whup your ass when you come home.

Thus the child obtains reinforcement for being tough and showing nerve.

While fighting, some children cry as though they are doing something they are ambivalent about. The fight may be against their wishes, yet they may feel constrained to fight or face the consequences—not just from peers but also from caretakers or parents, who may administer another beating if they back down. Some adults recall receiving such lessons from their own parents and justify repeating them to their children as a way to toughen them up. Looking capable of taking care of oneself as a form of self-defense is a dominant theme among both street-oriented and decent adults who worry about the safety of their children. There is thus at times a convergence in their child-rearing practices, although the rationales behind them may differ.

Self-Image Based on "Juice"

By the time they are teenagers, most youths have either internalized the code of the streets or at least learned the need to comport themselves in accordance with its rules, which chiefly have to do with interpersonal communication. The code revolves around the presentation of self. Its basic requirement is the display of a certain predisposition to violence. Accordingly, one's bearing must send the unmistakable if sometimes subtle message to "the next person" in public that one is capable of violence and mayhem when the situation requires it, that one can take care of oneself. The nature of this communication is largely determined by the demands of the circumstances but can include facial expressions, gait, and verbal expressions—all of which are geared mainly to deterring aggression. Physical appearance, including clothes, jewelry, and grooming, also plays an important part in how a person is viewed; to be respected, it is important to have the right look.

Even so, there are no guarantees against challenges, because there are always people around looking for a fight to increase their share of respect—or "juice," as it is sometimes called on the street. Moreover, if a person is assaulted, it is important, not only in the eyes of his opponent but also in the eyes of his "running buddies," for him to avenge himself. Otherwise he risks being "tried" (challenged) or "moved on" by any number of others. To maintain his honor he must show he is not someone to be "messed with" or "dissed." In general, the person must "keep himself straight" by managing his position of respect among others; this involves in part his self-image, which is shaped by what he thinks others are thinking of him in relation to his peers.

Objects play an important and complicated role in establishing self-image. Jackets, sneakers, gold jewelry, reflect not just a person's taste, which tends to be tightly regulated among adolescents of all social classes, but also a willingness to possess things that may require defending. A boy wearing a fashionable, expensive jacket, for example, is vulnerable to attack by another who covets the jacket and either cannot afford to buy one or wants the added satisfaction of depriving someone else of his. However, if the boy forgoes the desirable jacket and wears one that isn't "hip," he runs the risk of being teased and possibly even assaulted as an unworthy person. To be allowed to hang with certain prestigious crowds, a boy must wear a different set of expensive clothes—sneakers and athletic suit—every day. Not to be able to do so might make him appear socially deficient. The youth comes to covet such items especially when he sees easy prey wearing them.

In acquiring valued things, therefore, a person shores up his identity—but since it is an identity based on having things, it is highly precarious. This very precariousness gives a heightened sense of urgency to staying even with peers, with whom the person is actually competing. Young men and women who are able to command respect through their presentation of self—by allowing their possessions and their body language to speak for them—may not have to campaign for regard but may, rather, gain it by the force of their manner. Those who are unable to command respect in this way must actively campaign for it—and are thus particularly alive to slights.

One way of campaigning for status is by taking the possessions of others. In this context, seemingly ordinary objects can become trophies imbued with symbolic value that far exceeds their monetary worth. Possession of the trophy can symbolize the ability to violate somebody—to "get in his face," to take something of value from him, to "dis" him, and thus to enhance one's own worth by stealing someone else's. The trophy does not have to be something material. It can be another person's sense of honor, snatched away with a derogatory remark. It can be the outcome of a fight. It can be the imposition of a certain standard, such as a girl's getting herself recognized as the most beautiful. Material things, however, fit easily into the pattern. Sneakers, a pistol, even somebody else's girlfriend, can become a trophy.

When a person can take something from another and then flaunt it, he gains a certain regard by being the owner, or the controller, of that thing. But this display of ownership can then provoke other people to challenge him. This game of who controls what is thus constantly being played out on inner-city streets, and the trophy—extrinsic or intrinsic, tangible or intangible—identifies the current winner.

An important aspect of this often violent give-and-take is its zero-sum quality. That is, the extent to which one person can raise himself up depends on his ability to put another person down. This underscores the alienation that permeates the inner-city ghetto community. There is a generalized sense that very little respect is to be had, and therefore everyone competes to get what affirmation he can of the little that is available. The craving for respect that results gives people thin skins. Shows of deference by others can be highly soothing, contributing to a sense of security, comfort, self-confidence, and self-respect. Transgressions by others which go unanswered diminish these feelings and are believed to encourage further transgressions. Hence one must be ever vigilant against the transgressions of others or even *appearing* as if transgressions will be tolerated. Among young people, whose sense of self-esteem is particularly vulnerable, there is an especially heightened concern with being disrespected. Many inner-city young men in particular crave respect to such a degree that they will risk their lives to attain and maintain it.

The issue of respect is thus closely tied to whether a person has an inclination to be violent, even as a victim. In the wider society people may not feel required to retaliate physically after an attack, even though they are aware that they have been degraded or taken advantage of. They may feel a great need to defend themselves during an attack, or to behave in such a way as to deter aggression (middle-class people certainly can and do become victims of street-oriented youths), but they are much more likely than street-oriented people to feel that they can walk away from a possible altercation with their self-esteem intact. Some people may even have the strength of character to flee, without any thought that their self-respect or esteem will be diminished.

In impoverished inner-city black communities, however, particularly among young males and perhaps increasingly among females, such flight would be extremely difficult. To run away would likely leave one's self-esteem in tatters. Hence people often feel constrained not only to stand up and at least attempt to resist during an assault but also to "pay back"—to seek revenge—after a successful assault on their person. This may include going to get a weapon or even getting relatives involved. Their very identity and self-respect, their honor, is often intricately tied up with the way they perform on the streets during and after such encounters. This outlook reflects the circumscribed opportunities of the inner-city poor. Generally people outside the ghetto have other ways of gaining status and regard, and thus do not feel so dependent on such physical displays.

By Trial of Manhood

On the street, among males these concerns about things and identity have come to be expressed in the concept of "manhood." Manhood in the inner city means taking the prerogatives of men with respect to strangers, other men, and women—being distinguished as a man. It implies physicality and a certain ruthlessness. Regard and respect are associated with this concept in large part because of its practical application: if others have little or no regard for a person's manhood, his very life and those of his loved ones could be in jeopardy. But there is a chicken-and-egg aspect to this situation: one's physical safety is more likely to be jeopardized in public *because* manhood is associated with respect. In other words, an existential link has been created between the idea of manhood and one's self-esteem, so that it has become hard to say which is primary. For many inner-city youths, manhood and respect are flip sides of the same coin; physical and psychological well-being are inseparable, and both require a sense of control, of being in charge.

The operating assumption is that a man, especially a real man, knows what other men know—the code of the streets. And if one is not a real man, one is somehow diminished as a person, and there are certain valued things one simply does not deserve. There is thus believed to be a certain justice to the code, since it is considered that everyone has the opportunity to know it. Implicit in this is that everybody is held responsible for being familiar with the code. If the victim of a mugging, for example, does not know the code and so responds "wrong," the perpetrator may feel justified even in killing him and may feel no remorse. He may think, "Too bad, but it's his fault. He should have known better."

So when a person ventures outside, he must adopt the code—a kind of shield, really—to prevent others from "messing with" him. In these circumstances it is easy for people to think they are being tried or tested by others even when this is not the case. For it is sensed that something extremely valuable is at stake in every interaction, and people are encouraged to rise to the occasion, particularly with strangers. For people who are unfamiliar with the code—generally people who live outside the inner city—the concern with respect in the most ordinary interactions can be frightening and incomprehensible. But for those who are invested in the code, the clear object of their demeanor is to discourage strangers from even thinking about testing their manhood. And the sense of power that attends the ability to deter others can be alluring even to those who know the code without being heavily invested in it—the decent inner-city youths. Thus a boy who has been leading a basically decent life can, in trying circumstances, suddenly resort to deadly force.

Central to the issue of manhood is the widespread belief that one of the most effective ways of gaining respect is to manifest "nerve." Nerve is shown when one takes another person's possessions (the more valuable the better), "messes with" someone's woman, throws the first punch, "gets in someone's face," or pulls a trigger. Its proper display helps on the spot to check others who would violate one's person and also helps to build a reputation that works to prevent future challenges. But since such a show of nerve is a forceful expression of disrespect toward the person on the receiving end, the victim may be greatly offended and seek to retaliate with equal or greater force. A display of nerve, therefore, can easily provoke a life-threatening response, and the background knowledge of that possibility has often been incorporated into the concept of nerve.

True nerve exposes a lack of fear of dying. Many feel that it is acceptable to risk dying over the principle of respect. In fact, among the hard-core street-oriented, the clear risk of violent death may be preferable to being "dissed" by another. The youths who have internalized this attitude and convincingly display it in their public bearing are among

the most threatening people of all, for it is commonly assumed that they fear no man. As the people of the community say, “They are the baddest dudes on the street.” They often lead an existential life that may acquire meaning only when they are faced with the possibility of imminent death. Not to be afraid to die is by implication to have few compunctions about taking another’s life. Not to be afraid to die is the quid pro quo of being able to take somebody else’s life—for the right reasons, if the situation demands it. When others believe this is one’s position, it gives one a real sense of power on the streets. Such credibility is what many inner-city youths strive to achieve, whether they are decent or street-oriented, both because of its practical defensive value and because of the positive way it makes them feel about themselves. The difference between the decent and the street-oriented youth is often that the decent youth makes a conscious decision to appear tough and manly; in another setting—with teachers, say, or at his part-time job—he can be polite and deferential. The street-oriented youth, on the other hand, has made the concept of manhood a part of his very identity; he has difficulty manipulating it—it often controls him.

Girls and Boys

Increasingly, teenage girls are mimicking the boys and trying to have their own version of "manhood." Their goal is the same—to get respect, to be recognized as capable of setting or maintaining a certain standard. They try to achieve this end in the ways that have been established by the boys, including posturing, abusive language, and the use of violence to resolve disputes, but the issues for the girls are different. Although conflicts over turf and status exist among the girls, the majority of disputes seem rooted in assessments of beauty (which girl in a group is "the cutest"), competition over boyfriends, and attempts to regulate other people's knowledge of and opinions about a girl's behavior or that of someone close to her, especially her mother.

A major cause of conflicts among girls is "he say, she say." This practice begins in the early school years and continues through high school. It occurs when "people," particularly girls, talk about others, thus putting their "business in the streets." Usually one girl will say something negative about another in the group, most often behind the person's back. The remark will then get back to the person talked about. She may retaliate or her friends may feel required to "take up for" her. In essence this is a form of group gossiping in which individuals are negatively assessed and evaluated. As with much gossip, the things said may or may not be true, but the point is that such imputations can cast aspersions on a person's good name. The accused is required to defend herself against the slander, which can result in arguments and fights, often over little of real substance. Here again is the problem of low self-esteem, which encourages youngsters to be highly sensitive to slights and to be vulnerable to feeling easily "dissed." To avenge the dissing, a fight is usually necessary.

Because boys are believed to control violence, girls tend to defer to them in situations of conflict. Often if a girl is attacked or feels slighted, she will get a brother, uncle, or cousin to do her fighting for her. Increasingly, however, girls are doing their own fighting and are even asking their male relatives to teach them how to fight. Some girls form groups that attack other girls or take things from them. A hard-core segment of inner-city girls inclined toward violence seems to be developing. As one thirteen-year-old girl in a detention center for youths who have committed violent acts told me, "To get people to leave you alone, you gotta fight. Talking don't always get you out of stuff." One major difference between girls and boys: girls rarely use guns. Their fights are therefore not life-or-death struggles. Girls are not often willing to put their lives on the line for "manhood." The ultimate form of respect on the male-dominated inner-city street is thus reserved for men.

"Going for Bad"

In the most fearsome youths such a cavalier attitude toward death grows out of a very limited view of life. Many are uncertain about how long they are going to live and believe they could die violently at any time. They accept this fate; they live on the edge. Their manner conveys the message that nothing intimidates them, whatever turn the encounter takes, they maintain their attack—rather like a pit bull, whose spirit many such boys admire. The demonstration of such tenacity "shows heart" and earns their respect.

This fearlessness has implications for law enforcement. Many street-oriented boys are much more concerned about the threat of "justice" at the hands of a peer than at the hands of the police. Moreover, many feel not only that they have little to lose by going to prison but that they have something to gain. The toughening-up one experiences in prison can actually enhance one's reputation on the streets. Hence the system loses influence over the hard core who are without jobs, with little perceptible stake in the system. If mainstream society has done nothing *for them*, they counter by making sure it can do nothing to them.

At the same time, however, a competing view maintains that true nerve consists in backing down, walking away from a fight, and going on with one's business. One fights only in self-defense. This view emerges from the decent philosophy that life is precious, and it is an important part of the socialization process common in decent homes. It discourages violence as the primary means of resolving disputes and encourages youngsters to accept nonviolence and talk as confrontational strategies. But "if the deal goes down," self-defense is greatly encouraged. When there is enough positive support for this orientation, either in the home or among one's peers, then nonviolence has a chance to prevail. But it prevails at the cost of relinquishing a claim to being bad and tough, and therefore sets a young person up as at the very least alienated from street-oriented peers and quite possibly a target of derision or even violence.

Although the nonviolent orientation rarely overcomes the impulse to strike back in an encounter, it does introduce a certain confusion and so can prompt a measure of soul-searching, or even profound ambivalence. Did the person back down with his respect intact or did he back down only to be judged a "punk"—a person lacking manhood? Should he or she have acted? Should he or she have hit the other person in the mouth? These questions beset many young men and women during public confrontations. What is the "right" thing to do? In the quest for honor, respect, and local status—which few young people are uninterested in—common sense most often prevails, which leads many to opt for the tough approach, enacting their own particular versions of the display of nerve. The presentation of oneself as rough and tough is very often quite acceptable until one is tested. And then that presentation may help the person pass the test, because it will cause fewer questions to be asked about what he did and why. It is hard for a person to explain why he lost the fight or why he backed down. Hence many will strive to appear to "go for bad," while hoping they will never be tested. But when they are tested, the outcome of the situation may quickly be out of their hands, as they become wrapped up in the circumstances of the moment.

An Oppositional Culture

The attitudes of the wider society are deeply implicated in the code of the streets. Most people in inner-city communities are not totally invested in the code, but the significant minority of hard-core street youths who are have to maintain the code in order to establish reputations, because they have—or feel they have—few other ways to assert themselves. For these young people the standards of the street code are the only game in town. The extent to which some children—particularly those who through upbringing have become most alienated and those lacking in strong and conventional social support—experience, feel, and internalize racist rejection and contempt from mainstream society may strongly encourage them to express contempt for the more conventional society in turn. In dealing with this contempt and rejection, some youngsters will consciously invest themselves and their considerable mental resources in what amounts to an oppositional culture to preserve themselves and their self-respect. Once they do, any respect they might be able to garner in the wider system pales in comparison with the respect available in the local system; thus they often lose interest in even attempting to negotiate the mainstream system.

At the same time, many less alienated young blacks have assumed a street-oriented demeanor as a way of expressing their blackness while really embracing a much more moderate way of life; they, too, want a nonviolent setting in which to live and raise a family. These decent people are trying hard to be part of the mainstream culture, but the racism, real and perceived, that they encounter helps to legitimate the oppositional culture. And so on occasion they adopt street behavior. In fact, depending on the demands of the situation, many people in the community slip back and forth between decent and street behavior.

A vicious cycle has thus been formed. The hopelessness and alienation many young inner-city black men and women feel, largely as a result of endemic joblessness and persistent racism, fuels the violence they engage in. This violence serves to confirm the negative feelings many whites and some middle-class blacks harbor toward the ghetto poor, further legitimating the oppositional culture and the code of the streets in the eyes of many poor young blacks. Unless this cycle is broken, attitudes on both sides will become increasingly entrenched, and the violence, which claims victims black and white, poor and affluent, will only escalate.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe the central values and norms (or rules) that form the "code of the streets."
2. How does Anderson explain the origin of the code of the streets?
3. Describe the socialization of "street kids," noting how this socialization increases the likelihood that they will resort to violence in various situations. In your description, draw on both Sutherland's differential association and Akers's social learning theories.
4. Why do individuals who oppose the code of the streets nevertheless conform to its rules on occasion?
5. To what extent does the code of the streets affect the behavior of girls?

PART IV

ANOMIE/STRAIN THEORIES OF CRIME

Francis T. Cullen
University of Cincinnati

Robert Agnew
Emory University

Pamela Wilcox
Pennsylvania State University

Anomie and strain theory are distinct but related theories of crime (see Agnew, 1997a; Agnew and Passas, 1997; Baumer, 2007; Baumer and Gustafson, 2007; Bernard, 1987; Burton and Cullen, 1992; Messner, 1988, for discussions of the relationship between these theories). Contemporary versions of these theories trace their origins to the work of Merton (1938) and to the revisions in Merton's theory made by Cohen (1955) and Cloward and Ohlin (1960). Messner and Rosenfeld's (2013) institutional-anomie theory of crime now represents the leading version of anomie theory (see also Messner and Rosenfeld, 2006; Messner et al., 2008, 2019; Rosenfeld and Messner, 1995), while Agnew's (1992, 2005, 2006a, b, 2009) general strain theory represents the leading version of strain theory.

Anomie Theory

Anomie theory has focused on explaining why some societies, such as the United States, have higher crime rates than others. According to Merton's (1938) version of the theory, the United States places a relatively strong emphasis on the goal of monetary success, but a weak emphasis on the legitimate norms for achieving this goal, like education and hard work. As a consequence, the goal-seeking behavior of individuals is subject to less regulation. Individuals are more likely to pursue monetary success using whatever means are necessary—including crime. Societies that fail to adequately regulate goal-seeking behavior are said to be characterized by a state of "anomie" or normlessness.

Merton's arguments in this area were largely neglected until the 1980s. Most attention instead focused on his version of strain theory (see below). During the 1980s and 1990s, however, several scholars called attention to Merton's anomie theory and began to suggest refinements to it (Bernard, 1987; Burton and Cullen, 1992; Cullen, 1984; Messner, 1988; Passas, 1997; Rosenfeld, 1989). Messner and Rosenfeld (2006) drew heavily on the theory when they developed their institutional-anomie theory of crime (see Chapter 13 in this part). Like Merton, they attempt to explain why the United States has such a high crime rate (and, like Merton, their arguments are applicable to other societies). And they begin their explanation by drawing on Merton's argument that the higher crime rate in the United States stems from a cultural system that encourages everyone to strive for monetary success but places little

emphasis on the legitimate norms for achieving such success. This emphasis on the unrestrained pursuit of monetary success is what they refer to as the "American Dream."

Messner and Rosenfeld, however, go on to argue that the American Dream is only part of the explanation for the higher crime rate in the United States. In particular, they argue that the cultural emphasis on money is paralleled by an institutional structure that is dominated by the economy. The other major institutions in the United States—the family, school, and political system—are all subservient to economic institutions. Noneconomic goals and roles are devalued. For example, little value is placed on the role of education for its own sake or on the role of homemaker. Noneconomic institutions must accommodate themselves to the demands of the economy (e.g., parents struggle to arrange childcare so they can work). And economic norms have come to penetrate these other institutions (e.g., the school system, like the economic system, is based on the individualized competition for rewards). As a result, institutions such as the family, school, and political system are less able to effectively socialize or train individuals and to effectively sanction deviant behavior. For example, it is more difficult for parents to effectively socialize and supervise their children when parents must devote the bulk of their time and energy to work.

There have been several efforts to test institutional-anomie theory (for overviews, see Baumer, 2009; Kubrin et al., 2009; Messner and Rosenfeld, 2006, 2013; Messner et al., 2019; Pratt and Cullen, 2005; for selected studies, see Baumer and Gustafson, 2007; Bjerregaard and Cochran, 2008; Chamlin and Cochran, 1995; Hughes et al., 2015; Jensen and Akers, 2003; Maume and Lee, 2003; Messner and Rosenfeld, 1997; Piquero and Piquero, 1998; Savolainen, 2000). The central prediction of the theory is that high crime rates stem from the dominance of the economy over other institutions, such as the family, school, and political system. If this is true, crime rates should be higher in those countries or areas where economic institutions are relatively strong and lower in those areas where noneconomic institutions are relatively strong. Researchers have measured the strength of noneconomic institutions in terms of such factors as the ratio of marriages to divorces, levels of religious participation (church membership), levels of political participation (voter turnout), and the strength of social welfare programs (e.g., family support, social security, unemployment insurance programs). Most studies suggest that crime rates are lower in societies and areas that are not dominated by the economy; that is, crime rates are lower in societies and areas with stronger families, schools, religious institutions, and political systems. Further, most studies suggest that the effect of economic stressors on crime is lower in societies and areas where noneconomic institutions are stronger. In particular, economic stressors such as poverty and high rates of income inequality have a lower effect on crime rates in areas where welfare spending is higher and noneconomic institutions such as the family and religion are stronger.

Institutional-anomie theory also predicts that crime is higher in societies or areas that place a stronger emphasis on the unrestrained pursuit of money (i.e., the "American Dream"). So, for example, crime should be higher in areas where more people agree that "there are no right or wrong ways to make money, only hard or easy ways." Studies here have produced mixed results, which may reflect differences in the way the American Dream is measured (e.g., Baumer and Gustafson, 2007; Hirtenlehner et al., 2013). Studies also suggest that people in the United States do *not* place a relatively strong emphasis on the unrestrained pursuit of money (Cao, 2004; Chamlin and Cochran, 2007; Hughes et al., 2015; Jensen, 2002; see also Jensen and Akers, 2003. Recent data, however, indicate that many countries have similar or higher rates of serious crime than the United States; Chamlin and Cochran, 2007)). Finally, there have been some efforts to apply institutional-anomie theory at the individual level, and here data suggest that individuals who adopt aspects of the "American Dream" and have weak commitments to noneconomic institutions are more likely to engage in crime (see Messner et al., 2019).

In sum, institutional-anomie theory has some support, particularly that part of the theory that states that crime is most likely in those societies and areas where economic institutions are relatively strong and noneconomic institutions such as the family and polity are relatively weak.

Strain Theory

Classic Strain Theory

Strain theory has focused on explaining why some individuals and groups *within* a society are more likely to engage in crime than others. According to the theory, individuals are pressured into crime. Most commonly, it has been argued that they are pressured into crime when they are prevented from achieving cultural goals like monetary success or middle-class status through legitimate channels. This is the central argument of the "classic" strain theories of Merton (1938), Cohen (1955), and Cloward and Ohlin (1960); (see Chapters 11 and 12 in this part). These theorists argue that everyone in the United States is encouraged to pursue the goals of monetary success or middle-class status. Lower-class individuals, however, are often prevented from achieving such goals through legitimate channels. Their parents do not equip them with the skills and values necessary to do well in school, they attend inferior schools and grow up in troubled neighborhoods, they cannot afford college, and they may face discrimination in the job market. Our society, then, encourages everyone to pursue certain goals but then prevents large segments of the population from achieving these goals through legitimate channels. Individuals experiencing such goal blockage are under a great deal of strain or pressure, and they *may* respond by engaging in crime.

They may attempt to achieve their goals through illegitimate channels, such as theft, drug selling, and prostitution. They may reject the goals of monetary success and middle-class status and substitute new goals that they can achieve. Their hostility toward the society that frustrates them, among other things, may lead them to emphasize goals that are conducive to crime (e.g., being a good fighter). Or they may simply reject cultural goals and norms, retreating into drug use. Strain theorists are careful to emphasize that only some strained individuals turn to crime, and they have tried to specify the factors that determine whether strain leads to crime (see Agnew, 1997a, 2000; Baumer and Gustafson, 2007; Cullen, 1984). Cohen (1955) and Cloward and Ohlin (1960) argue that strained individuals are unlikely to engage in crime unless they first form or join a delinquent subculture whose values are conducive to crime. These theorists describe the conditions under which strained individuals are likely to form delinquent subcultures, and their accounts represent the dominant explanations for the origin of delinquent subcultures.

The classic strain theories dominated research on the causes of crime during the 1950s and 1960s, and had a major impact on public policy (see Burton and Cullen, 1992; Clinard, 1964; Cole, 1975; Empey et al., 1999). Strain theory, in particular, was one of the inspirations for the "War on Poverty" that was launched during the 1960s. The War on Poverty was designed to increase opportunities for low-income and minority individuals to achieve success through legitimate channels. Many of the programs associated with the War on Poverty have since been dismantled, but some —like Project Head Start and Job Corps—remain.

Classic strain theory came under heavy attack during the late 1960s and 1970s, and it no longer dominates criminology as it once did (see Agnew, 2000; Agnew and Passas, 1997; Akers and Sellers, 2008; Bernard, 1984; Burton and Cullen, 1992; Cole, 1975; Rosenfeld, 1989). Among other things, a number of empirical studies failed to provide support for the theory (see Agnew, 2000; Akers and Sellers, 2008; Hirschi, 1969; Jensen, 1995; Kornhauser, 1978). Classic strain theory was most commonly tested by examining the disjunction between aspirations (the goals one ideally would like to achieve) and expectations (the goals one realistically expects to achieve). If the theory is true, we would expect people with high aspirations and low expectations to be most delinquent (i.e., people who say they ideally want a lot but expect very little). The research, however, does not support this prediction. Crime is highest among those with both low aspirations and low expectations (a finding most commonly explained in terms of

social control theory—see Part V). Further, a series of self-report studies during the 1960s and 1970s revealed that delinquency was not concentrated among lower-class individuals. Middle-class delinquency was quite common, perhaps as common as lower-class delinquency (see Akers et al., 2016; Tittle and Meier, 1990). This was taken as further evidence against classic strain theory (since the pressure for delinquency should be greatest in the lower classes).

Several researchers, however, have recently challenged the evidence against classic strain theory. Among other things, they argue that there are better ways to measure strain than by the disjunction between aspirations and expectations. Aspirations or ideal goals have something of the utopian in them and so are not taken seriously. The failure to achieve such goals, then, is not an important source of strain (see Agnew, 1992, 2000; Agnew et al., 2008; Agnew and Passas, 1997; Bernard, 1984; Burton and Cullen, 1992; Burton et al., 1994; Burton and Dunaway, 1994; Cullen, 1984; 1988; Hoffmann and Ireland, 1995; Kubrin et al., 2009; Menard, 1995; Messner, 1988; Passas and Agnew, 1997, for other criticisms). A few recent studies have attempted to provide better tests of classic strain theory (Agnew et al., 1996; Baron, 2004; Baumer and Gustafson, 2007; Burton et al., 1994; Burton and Dunaway, 1994; Cernkovich et al., 2000; Hagan and McCarthy, 1997; Kubrin et al., 2009; Menard, 1995, 1997). These studies tend to provide more support for the theory. Agnew et al. (1996), for example, attempt to directly measure strain by asking individuals how satisfied they are with their financial situation. This measure is related to crime, with the more dissatisfied being more criminal. Additional tests are needed before we can reach any definitive conclusions about classic strain theory, but the theory has experienced a minor revival (see Adler and Laufer, 1995; Baumer and Gustafson, 2007; Passas and Agnew, 1997).

In addition, classic strain theory has increasingly been used to explain group differences in crime rates, particularly differences between communities and societies. Many studies find that the strongest predictor of community differences in crime rates in the United States is economic deprivation (Agnew, 2005; Baumer and Gustafson, 2007; Land et al., 1990; Pratt and Cullen, 2005). That is, poorer communities have much higher crime rates than wealthier communities. The effect of economic deprivation on crime can be explained in terms of several theories. Social disorganization theorists, for example, argue that such deprivation leads to a breakdown in social control (see Part II). But economic deprivation can also be taken as a measure of the strain experienced by community members (see Agnew, 1999; Pratt and Cullen, 2005).

While economic deprivation is strongly related to community differences in crime rates in the United States, it is unrelated or weakly related to societal differences in crime rates. One reason for this may be that societies differ in the emphasis they place on economic success. So deprivation, in and of itself, may not lead to crime. Following Merton, deprivation may only lead to crime in those societies where most people strongly desire economic success. It has been difficult to directly test this idea (although see Chamlin and Sanders, 2013). However, this idea has been indirectly tested by examining the effect of economic inequality on societal crime rates. Certain societies are characterized by high levels of economic inequality, with some people being very rich and others very poor. The existence of such "poverty in the midst of plenty" may lead poor people to increase their desire for economic success—since they see that others around them have achieved such success. Most studies support this argument, with economic inequality being perhaps the strongest predictor of societal differences in crime rates (Agnew, 2006b; LaFree, 1999; Messner, 2003; Neapolitan, 1997; Pratt and Godsey, 2003; Santos et al., 2018). The effect of economic inequality on crime rates is especially strong when such inequality is due to discrimination against racial/ethnic or religious groups—perhaps because inequality is more likely to be seen as unjust in such circumstances (Messner, 1989, 2003; see also Blau and Blau, 1982). (Note: Messner and Rosenfeld's institutional-anomie theory has been criticized for neglecting the effects of economic deprivation and inequality on crime rates [Baumer, 2009; Bernburg, 2002]. Messner and Rosenfeld [2006] acknowledge this criticism and state that they intend to better incorporate such effects into their theory [see also Pratt and Godsey, 2003].)

Classic strain theory, then, has some support—although several problems with the theory have been identified, including its limited ability to explain middle-class crime.

Revisions in Classic Strain Theory

The criticisms against classic strain theory spurred several efforts to revise the theory (see Adler and Laufer, 1995; Agnew, 2000; Bernard, 1990; Burton and Cullen, 1992; Clinard, 1964; Cohen, 1965; Elliott et al., 1979; Greenberg, 1977; Merton, 1968; Passas and Agnew, 1997; Simon and Gagnon, 1976). Certain of the revisions attempt to apply the theory to the explanation of middle-class crime and delinquency. One major revision, for example, argues that strain is a function of *relative deprivation*. That is, one's level of strain or frustration is not dependent on the absolute amount of money one has, but is dependent on how much money one has *relative* to those in one's "reference group" (see Burton et al., 1994; Burton and Dunaway, 1994; Cohen, 1965, 1997; Passas, 1997). Wealthy individuals, as a consequence, may experience strain if they compare themselves to even wealthier people around them. Limited data provide some support for this argument (Bernburg et al., 2009; Burton et al., 1994; Burton and Dunaway, 1994; although see Baron, 2004).

Another revision argues that adolescents pursue a variety of goals in addition to middle-class status and monetary success. Such goals include popularity with peers and potential romantic partners, athletic success, positive relations with parents and others, and good grades. The achievement of these goals is said to be a function of several factors in addition to social class—factors like intelligence, personality characteristics, and physical appearance and ability. As a result, middle-class adolescents may also experience strain quite frequently. This version of strain theory has not been well tested, although preliminary tests have not been encouraging (see Agnew, 2000, for an overview).

General Strain Theory

Most of the revisions in classic strain theory continue to argue that the major source of strain or frustration is the failure to achieve positively valued goals. They simply argue that goal achievement should be measured relative to others or they broaden the number of goals under consideration. Agnew's (1992, 2006a, b, 2009, 2012) general strain theory, however, points to additional sources of strain.

According to Agnew (1992: 50), strain results from negative relationships with others: "relationships in which others are not treating the individual as he or she would like to be treated." There are three major types of negative relations: relations where others (1) prevent or threaten to prevent the achievement of positively valued goals (e.g., monetary success, thrills/excitement), (2) remove or threaten to remove positively valued stimuli (e.g., the loss of a romantic partner, the death of a parent), or (3) present or threaten to present negatively valued stimuli (e.g., insults, physical assault). Such negative relationships increase the likelihood that individuals will experience a range of negative emotions, such as anger and frustration. These emotions create pressure for corrective action, with crime being one possible response. Crime may be a method for alleviating strain (e.g., running away from home, assaulting those who insult you), seeking revenge, or managing the negative emotions that the individual experiences (e.g., through illicit drug use). Like previous theorists, Agnew argues that only some strained individuals turn to crime, and he discusses those factors that influence whether one reacts to strains with crime.

Agnew, then, significantly broadens the focus of strain theory. Studies provide some support for Agnew's general strain theory (see the overviews in Agnew, 2006a, b, 2012, 2015a; Brezina, 2017; for selected studies, see Agnew et al., 2002; Aseltine et al., 2000; Baron, 2004; De Coster and Kort-Butler, 2006; De Coster and Zito, 2010; Hay and

Evans, 2006; Hoffmann and Cerbone, 1999; Kaufman, 2009; Mazerolle, 1998; Moon et al., 2009; Paternoster and Mazerolle, 1994; Rebellon et al., 2012; Slocum, 2010; Wang and Holtfreter, 2012). In one such study (Agnew and White, 1992), delinquency was found to be higher among individuals experiencing a variety of negative life events (e.g., assault, theft, parental divorce, parental unemployment) and various relational problems with teachers, parents, friends, and others (e.g., teachers talk down to and embarrass them, parents get angry over little things, classmates do not like them). In some of the other studies just cited, delinquency has been linked to strains such as race/ethnic and gender discrimination; bullying, including cyber-bullying; homelessness; and economic problems of various types, such as trouble paying bills.

Researchers have also examined those factors said to influence whether individuals react to strains with crime. General strain theory predicts that strained individuals are more likely to engage in criminal coping if they have poor coping skills, receive little support from others, are low in social control, associate with delinquent peers, hold beliefs favorable to crime, etc. Researchers usually focus on one or a few of these characteristics. For example, they examine whether strained individuals who associate with delinquent peers are more likely to engage in crime than those who do not. The data here are mixed, with some studies supporting general strain theory and some not (Agnew, 2013, 2015a). But Agnew (2013) recently argued that a criminal response is likely only when individuals possess *several* factors that increase the propensity for criminal coping (e.g., they have poor coping skills, are low in control, *and* associate with delinquent peers). And recent data provide support for this argument, suggesting that criminal coping is much more likely among such individuals (Thaxton and Agnew, 2018; also see Mazerolle and Maahs, 2000).

Agnew and others continue to refine general strain theory. Papers have used general strain theory to explain the relationship between age and crime (Agnew, 1997b), gender and crime (Broidy and Agnew, 1997; Jang, 2007; Kaufman, 2009), sexual orientation and crime (Button and Worthen, 2017), offending over the life course (Agnew, 1997b; Slocum, 2010; Slocum et al., 2005), community characteristics and crime (Agnew, 1999), and race/ethnicity and crime (De Coster and Thompson, 2017; Isom Scott and Grosholz, 2019: Kaufman, 2005, Kaufman et al., 2008; Perez et al., 2008). General strain theory has also been used to explain crime in countries outside the United States, including non-Western countries (Agnew, 2015b). In addition, Agnew (2001) has tried to predict which strains will be most strongly related to crime. Hundreds of specific strains fall under the three broad categories of strains listed by general strain theory, but data suggest that only some of these specific strains are related to crime. Drawing on research in several areas, Agnew argues that strains are most likely to result in crime when they are (1) seen as unjust, (2) seen as high in magnitude, (3) associated with low social control (see Part V in this text), and (4) create some pressure or incentive for criminal coping. Several strains that meet these conditions are listed. Agnew (2002) has argued that vicarious and anticipated strains, as well as experienced strains, may sometimes lead to crime. Finally, Agnew (2006b) has better described the reasons why strains increase the likelihood of crime. While strains affect crime primarily by increasing negative emotions such as anger, they may also reduce social control (see Part V), foster the social learning of crime (see Part III), and contribute to personality traits conducive to crime (see Part XII).

In sum, strain and anomie theory have experienced a major revival and are now among the most influential theories of crime. The readings that follow present the classic anomie and strain theories of Merton (1938) and Cohen (1955), as well as the new institutional-anomie theory of Messner and Rosenfeld (2001, 2012, 2013) and Agnew's (1992, 2005, 2006b, 2009, 2012) general strain theory.

References

Adler, Freda and William J. Laufer, eds. 1995. *The Legacy of Anomie Theory: Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **6**. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Agnew, Robert. 1992. "Foundation for a General Strain Theory of Crime and Delinquency." *Criminology* **30**: 47–87.

____. 1997a. "The Nature and Determinants of Strain: Another Look at Durkheim and Merton." In Nikos Passas and Robert Agnew (eds.), *The Future of Anomie Theory*, pp. 27–51. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

____. 1997b. "Stability and Change in Crime Over the Life Course: A Strain Theory Explanation." In Terence P. Thornberry (ed.), *Developmental Theories of Crime and Delinquency: Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **7**, pp. 101–132. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

____. 1999. "A General Strain Theory of Community Differences in Crime Rates." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **36**: 123–155.

____. 2000. "Sources of Criminality: Strain and Subcultural Theories." In Joseph F. Sheley (ed.), *Criminology: A Contemporary Handbook*, pp. 349–371. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

____. 2001. "Building on the Foundation of General Strain Theory: Specifying the Types of Strain Most Likely to Lead to Crime and Delinquency." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **38**: 319–361.

____. 2002. "Experienced, Vicarious, and Anticipated Strain." *Justice Quarterly* **19**: 603–632.

____. 2005. *Juvenile Delinquency: Causes and Control*, 2nd edition. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

____. 2006a. "General Strain Theory: Current Status and Directions for Further Research." In Francis T. Cullen, John Paul Wright, and Kristie R. Blevins (eds.), *Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **15**, pp. 101–123. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

____. 2006b. *Pressured Into Crime: An Overview of General Strain Theory*. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

____. 2009. "Strain Theories." In J. Mitchell Miller (ed.), *21st Century Criminology: A Reference Handbook*, pp. 332–339. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

____. 2012. "General Strain Theory." In Marvin D. Krohn, Alan J. Lizotte, and Gina Penly Hall (eds.), *Handbook on Crime and Deviance*, pp. 169–186. New York: Springer.

____. 2013. "When Criminal Coping Is Likely: An Extension of General Strain Theory." *Deviant Behavior* **34**: 653–670.

____. 2015a. "General Strain Theory and Delinquency." In Marvin D. Krohn and Jodi Lane (eds.), *The Handbook of Juvenile Delinquency and Juvenile Justice*. pp. 239–256. New York: Wiley Blackwell.

____. 2015b. "Using General Strain Theory to Explain Crime in Asian Societies." *Asian Journal of Criminology* **10**: 131–147.

Agnew, Robert, Timothy Brezina, John Paul Wright, and Francis T. Cullen. 2002. "Strain, Personality Traits, and Delinquency: Extending General Strain Theory." *Criminology* **40**: 43–72.

Agnew, Robert, Francis T. Cullen, Velmer S. Burton, Jr., T. David Evans, and R. Gregory Dunaway. 1996. "A New Test of Classic Strain Theory." *Justice Quarterly* **13**: 681–704.

Agnew, Robert, Shelley Keith Matthews, Jacob Bucher, Adria N. Welcher, and Corey Keyes. 2008. "Socioeconomic Status, Economic Problems, and Delinquency." *Youth and Society* **42**: 159–181.

Agnew, Robert and Nikos Passas. 1997. “Introduction.” In Robert Agnew and Nikos Passas (eds.), *The Future of Anomie Theory*, pp. 1–26. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Agnew, Robert and Helene Raskin White. 1992. “An Empirical Test of General Strain Theory.” *Criminology* **30**: 475–499.

Akers, Ronald L. and Christine S. Sellers. 2008. *Criminological Theories: Introduction, Evaluation, and Application*. New York: Oxford University Press

Akers, Ronald L., Christine S. Sellers, and Wesley G. Jennings. 2016. *Criminological Theories*, 7th edition. New York: *Oxford University Press*.

Aseltine, Robert H., Jr. Gore Susan, and Jennifer Gordon. 2000. “Life Stress, Anger and Anxiety, and Delinquency: An Empirical Test of General Strain Theory.” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* **41**: 256–275.

Baron, Stephen W. 2004. “General Strain, Street Youth and Crime: A Test of Agnew’s Revised Theory.” *Criminology* **42**: 457–484.

Baumer, Eric P. 2007. “Untangling Research Puzzles in Merton’s Multilevel Anomie Theory.” *Theoretical Criminology* **11**: 63–93.

____. 2009. “Messner, Steven F., and Richard Rosenfeld: Institutional-Anomie Theory.” In J. Mitchell Miller (ed.), *21st Century Criminology: A Reference Handbook*, pp. 623–628. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Baumer, Eric P. and Regan Gustafson. 2007. “Social Organization and Instrumental Crime: Assessing the Empirical Validity of Classic and Contemporary Anomie Theories.” *Criminology* **45**: 617–664.

Bernard, Thomas J. 1984. “Control Criticisms of Strain Theories: An Assessment of Theoretical and Empirical Adequacy.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **21**: 353–372.

____. 1987. “Testing Structural Strain Theories.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **24**: 262–280.

____. 1990. “Angry Aggression Among the ‘Truly Disadvantaged.’” *Criminology* **28**: 73–109.

Bernburg, Jon Gunnar. 2002. “Anomie, Social Change and Crime: A Theoretical Examination of Institutional-Anomie Theory.” *British Journal of Criminology* **42**: 729–742.

Bernburg, Jon Gunnar, Thorolfur Thorlindsson, and Inga Dora Sigfusdottir. 2009. “Relative Deprivation and Adolescent Outcomes in Iceland: A Multilevel Test.” *Social Forces* **87**: 1223–1249.

Bjerregaard, Beth and John K. Cochran. 2008. “A Cross-National Test of Institutional Anomie Theory.” *Western Criminology Review* **9**: 31–48.

Blau, Judith R. and Peter M. Blau. 1982. “The Cost of Inequality: Metropolitan Structure and Violent Crime.” *American Sociological Review* **47**: 114–129.

Brezina, Timothy. 2017. “General Strain Theory.” In Henry N. Pontell (ed.), *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice*. New York: Oxford University Press. Online publication https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264079.013.249

Broidy, Lisa and Robert Agnew. 1997. “Gender and Crime: A General Strain Theory Perspective.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **34**: 275–306.

Burton, Velmer S., Jr. and Francis T. Cullen, 1992. “The Empirical Status of Strain Theory.” *Journal of Crime and Justice* **15**(2): 1–30.

Burton, Velmer S., Jr., Francis T. Cullen, T. David Evans, and R. Gregory Dunaway. 1994. “Reconsidering Strain Theory: Operationalization, Rival Theories, and Adult Criminality.” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **10**: 213–239.

Burton, Velmer S., Jr. and R. Gregory Dunaway. 1994. “Strain, Relative Deprivation, and Middle-Class Delinquency.” In Greg Barak (ed.), *Varieties of Criminology: Readings from a Dynamic Discipline*, pp. 79–95. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Button, Deanna M. and Meredith G. F. Worthen. 2017. “Applying a General Strain Theory Framework to Understand School Weapon Carrying Among LGBT and Heterosexual Youth. *Criminology* **55**: 806–832.

Cao, Liqun. 2004. “Is American Society More Anomic? A Test of Merton’s Theory with Cross-National Data.” *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice* **28**: 17–31.

Cernkovich, Stephen A., Peggy C. Giordano, and Jennifer L. Rudolph. 2000. “Race, Crime, and the American Dream.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **37**: 131–170.

Chamlin, Mitchell B. and John K. Cochran. 1995. “Assessing Messner and Rosenfeld’s Institutional Anomie Theory: A Partial Test.” *Criminology* **33**: 411–429.

____. 2007. “An Evaluation of the Assumptions that Underlie Institutional Anomie Theory.” *Theoretical Criminology* **11**: 39–61.

Chamlin, Mitchell B. and Beth A. Sanders. 2013. “Falsifying Merton’s Macro-Level Anomie Theory of Profit-Motivated Crime: A Research Note.” *Deviant Behavior* **34**: 961–972.

Clinard, Marshall B. 1964. *Anomie and Deviant Behavior*. New York: Free Press.

Cloward, Richard A. and Lloyd Ohlin. 1960. *Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs*. New York: Free Press.

Cohen, Albert K. 1955. *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang*. New York: Free Press.

____. 1965. “The Sociology of the Deviant Act: Anomie Theory and Beyond.” *American Sociological Review* **30**: 5–14.

____. 1997. “An Elaboration of Anomie Theory.” In Nikos Passas and Robert Agnew (eds.), *The Future of Anomie Theory*, pp. 52–61. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Cole, S. 1975. “The Growth of Scientific Knowledge: Theories of Deviance as a Case Study.” In Lewis A. Coser (ed.), *The Idea of Social Structure*, pp. 175–220. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Cullen, Francis T. 1984. *Rethinking Crime and Deviance: The Emergence of a Structuring Tradition*. Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Allanheld.

____. 1988. “Were Cloward and Ohlin Strain Theorists?: Delinquency and Opportunity Revisited.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **25**: 214–241.

De Coster, Stacy and Lisa Kort-Butler. 2006. “How General Is General Strain Theory?” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **43**: 297–325.

De Coster, Stacy and Maxine S. Thompson. 2017. “Race and General Strain Theory: Microaggressions as Mundane Extreme Environmental Stressors.” *Justice Quarterly* **34**: 903–930.

De Coster, Stacy and Rena Cornell Zito. 2010. “Gender and General Strain Theory.” *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* **26**: 204–223.

Elliott, Delbert S., Suzanne S. Ageton, and Rachelle Canter. 1979. “An Integrated Theoretical Perspective on Delinquent Behavior.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **16**: 3–27.

Empey, LaMar T., Mark Stafford, and Carter H. Hay. 1999. *American Delinquency: Its Meaning and Construction*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Greenberg, David F. 1977. “Delinquency and the Age Structure of Society.” *Contemporary Crises* **1**: 189–223.

Hagan, John and Bill McCarthy. 1997. *Mean Streets*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hay, Carter and Michael M. Evans. 2006. “Violent Victimization and Involvement in Delinquency: Examining Predictions from General Strain Theory.” *Journal of Criminal Justice* **34**: 261–274.

Hirschi, Travis. 1969. *Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hirtenlehner, Helmut, Stephen Farrall, and Johann Bacher. 2013. Culture, Institutions, and Morally Dubious Behaviors: Testing Some Core Propositions of the Institutional-Anomie Theory. *Deviant Behavior* **34**: 291–320.

Hoffmann, John P. and Felice Gray Cerbone. 1999. “Stressful Life Events and Delinquency Escalation in Early Adolescence.” *Criminology* **37**: 343–374.

Hoffmann, John P. and Timothy Ireland. 1995. “Cloward and Ohlin’s Strain Theory Re-examined: An Elaborated Theoretical Model.” In Freda Adler and William S. Laufer (eds.), *The Legacy of Anomie Theory: Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **6**, pp. 247–270. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Hughes, Lorine A., Lonnie M. Schaible, and Benjamin R. Gibbs. 2015. “Economic Dominance, ‘the American Dream,’ and Homicide: A Cross-National Test of Institutional Anomie Theory.” *Sociological Inquiry* **85**: 100–128.

Isom Scott, Deena A. and Jessica M. Grosholz. 2019. “Unpacking the Racial Disparity in Crime from a Racialized General Strain Theory Perspective.” *Deviant Behavior* **40**: 1445–1463.

Jang, Sung Joon. 2007. “Gender Differences in Strain, Negative Emotions, and Coping Behaviors: A General Strain Theory Approach.” *Justice Quarterly* **24**: 523–553.

Jensen, Gary F. 1995. “Salvaging Structure Through Strain: A Theoretical and Empirical Critique.” In Freda Adler and William S. Laufer (eds.), *The Legacy of Anomie Theory: Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **6**, pp. 139–158. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

____. 2002. “Institutional Anomie and Societal Variations in Crime: A Critical Appraisal.” *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* **22**: 45–74.

Jensen, Gary and Ronald L. Akers. 2003. “Taking Social Learning Global: Micro-Macro Transitions in Criminological Theory.” In Ronald L. Akers and Gary F. Jensen (eds.), *Social Learning Theory and the Explanation of Crime: Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **11**, pp. 9–38. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.

Kaufman, Joanne M. 2005. “Explaining the Race/Ethnicity-Violence Relationship: Neighborhood Context and Social Psychological Processes.” *Justice Quarterly* **22**: 224–251.

____. 2009. “Gendered Responses to Serious Strain.” *Justice Quarterly* **26**: 410–444.

Kaufman, Joanne M., Cesar J. Rebellon, Sherod Thaxton, and Robert Agnew. 2008. “A General Strain Theory of Racial Differences in Offending.” *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology* **41**: 421–437.

Kornhauser, Ruth. 1978. *Social Sources of Delinquency*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kubrin, Charis E., Thomas D. Stucky, and Marvin D. Krohn. 2009. *Researching Theories of Crime and Deviance*. New York: Oxford University Press.

LaFree, Gary. 1999. “A Summary and Review of Cross-National Comparative Studies of Homicide.” In Dwayne Smith and Margaret A. Zahn (eds.), *Homicide: A Sourcebook of Social Research*, pp. 124–148. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Land, Kenneth C., Patricia McCall, and Lawrence Cohen. 1990. “Structural Covariates of Homicide Rates.” *American Journal of Sociology* **95**: 922–963.

Maume, Michael O. and Matthew R. Lee. 2003. “Social Institutions and Violence: A Sub-National Test of Institutional Anomie Theory.” *Criminology* **41**: 1137–1172.

Mazerolle, Paul. 1998. “Gender, General Strain, and Delinquency: An Empirical Examination.” *Justice Quarterly* **15**: 65–91.

Mazerolle, Paul and Jeff Maahs. 2000. “General Strain Theory and Delinquency: An Alternative Examination of Conditioning Influences.” *Justice Quarterly* **17**: 753–778.

Menard, Scott. 1995. “A Developmental Test of Mertonian Anomie Theory.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **32**: 136–174.

____. 1997. “A Developmental Test of Cloward’s Differential Opportunity Theory.” In Nikos Passas and Robert Agnew (eds.), *The Future of Anomie Theory*, pp. 142–186. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Merton, Robert K. 1938. “Social Structure and Anomie.” *American Sociological Review* **3**: 672–682.

____. 1968. *Social Theory and Social Structure*. New York: Free Press.

Messner, Steven F. 1988. “Merton’s ‘Social Structure and Anomie’: The Road Not Taken.” *Deviant Behavior* **9**: 33–53.

____. 1989. “Economic Discrimination and Societal Homicide Rates: Further Evidence of the Cost of Inequality.” *American Sociological Review* **54**: 597–611.

____. 2003. “Understanding Cross-National Variation in Criminal Violence.” In Wilhelm Heitmeyer and John Hagan (eds.), *International Handbook of Violence Research*, pp. 701–716. New York: Kluwer Academic.

Messner, Steven F. and Richard Rosenfeld. 1997. “Political Restraint of the Market and Levels of Criminal Homicide: A Cross-National Application of Institutional-Anomie Theory.” *Social Forces* **75**: 1393–1416.

____. 2001. “An Institutional-Anomie Theory of Crime.” In Raymond Paternoster and Ronet Bachman (eds.), *Explaining Crime and Criminals*, pp. 151–160. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

____. 2006. “The Present and Future of Institutional-Anomie Theory.” In Francis T. Cullen, John Paul Wright, and Kristie R. Blevins (eds.), *Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **15**, pp. 127–148. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

____. 2012. “Institutional Anomie Theory: A Macro-sociological Explanation of Crime.” In Marvin D. Krohn, Alan J. Lizotte, and Gina Penly Hall (eds.), *Handbook on Crime and Deviance*, pp. 209–224. New York: Springer.

____. 2013. *Crime and the American Dream*, 5th edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Messner, Steven F., Richard Rosenfeld, and Andreas Hoverman. 2019. “Institutional Anomie Theory: An Evolving Research Program” In Marvin D. Krohn, Nicole Hendrix, Gina Penley Hall, and Alan J. Lizotte (eds.), *Handbook on Crime and Deviance*, pp. 161–177. New York: Springer.

Messner, Steven F., Helmut Thorne, and Richard Rosenfeld. 2008. “Institutions, Anomie, and Violent Crime: Clarifying and Elaborating Institutional-Anomie Theory.” *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* **2**: 163–181.

Moon, Byongook, Merry Morash, Cynthia Perez McCluskey, and Hye-Won Hwang. 2009. “A Comprehensive Test of General Strain Theory.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **46**: 182–212.

Neapolitan, Jerome L. 1997. *Cross-National Crime*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Passas, Nikos. 1997. “Anomie and Relative Deprivation.” In Nikos Passas and Robert Agnew (eds.), *The Future of Anomie Theory*, pp. 62–94. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Passas, Nikos and Robert Agnew, eds. 1997. *The Future of Anomie Theory*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Paternoster, Raymond and Paul Mazerolle. 1994. “General Strain Theory and Delinquency: A Replication and Extension.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **31**: 235–263.

Perez, Deanna M., Wesley G. Jennings, and Angela R. Gover. 2008. “Specifying General Strain Theory: An Ethnically Relevant Approach.” *Deviant Behavior* **29**: 544–578.

Piquero, Alex and Nicole Leeper Piquero. 1998. “On Testing Institutional Anomie Theory with Varying Specifications.” *Studies on Crime and Crime Prevention* **7**: 61–84.

Pratt, Travis C. and Francis T. Cullen. 2005. “Assessing Macro-Level Predictors and Theories of Crime: A Meta-Analysis.” *Crime and Justice* **32**: 373–450.

Pratt, Travis C. and Timothy W. Godsey. 2003. “Social Support, Inequality, and Homicide: A Cross-National Test of an Integrated Theoretical Model.” *Criminology* **41**: 611–643.

Rebellon, Cesar J., Michelle E. Manasse, Karen T. Van Gundy, and Ellen S. Cohn. 2012. “Perceived Injustice and Delinquency: A Test of General Strain Theory.” *Journal of Criminal* **40**: 230–237.

Rosenfeld, Richard. 1989. “Robert Merton’s Contribution to the Sociology of Deviance.” *Sociological Inquiry* **59**: 453–466.

Rosenfeld, Richard and Steven F. Messner. 1995. “Crime and the American Dream: An Institutional Analysis.” In Freda Adler and William S. Laufer (eds.), *The Legacy of Anomie Theory: Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **6**, pp. 159–181. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Santos, Mateus Renno, Alexander Testa, and Douglas B. Weiss. 2018. “Where Poverty Matters: Examining the Cross-national Relationship Between Economic Deprivation and Homicide.” *The British Journal of Criminology* **68**: 372–393.

Savolainen, Jukka. 2000. “Inequality, Welfare State, and Homicide: Further Support for the Institutional Anomie Theory.” *Criminology* **38**: 1021–1042.

Simon, William and John H. Gagnon. 1976. “The Anomie of Affluence: A Post-Mertonian Conception.” *American Journal of Sociology* **82**: 356–378.

Slocum, Lee Ann. 2010. “General Strain Theory and Continuity in Offending over Time.” *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* **26**: 204–223.

Slocum, Lee Ann, Sally S. Simpson, and David A. Smith. 2005. “Strained Lives and Crime: Examining Intra-Individual Variation in Strain and Offending in a Sample of Incarcerated Women.” *Criminology* **43**: 827–854.

Thaxton, Sherod and Robert Agnew. 2018. “When Criminal Coping is Likely: An Examination of Conditioning Effects in General Strain Theory.” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **34**: 887–920.

Tittle, Charles R. and Robert F. Meier. 1990. “Specifying the SES/Delinquency Relationship.” *Criminology* **28**: 271–299.

Wang, Xia and Kristy Holtfreter. 2012. “The Effects of Corporation and Industry-Level Strain and Opportunity on Corporate Crime.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **49**: 151–185.

11.
Social Structure and Anomie*

Robert K. Merton

It has been said that the following article by Merton, "Social Structure and Anomie," is the most widely read article in sociology (Cole, 1975). Merton opens his 1938 article by challenging certain biologically based theories of crime that were popular at the time. Such theories view crime as the result of "biological drives" that are not adequately restrained by society. Merton instead argues that the motivation for crime frequently derives from society. His theory is in two parts.

The first part of the article presents what may be termed his "anomie" theory, which seeks to explain why some societies have higher rates of crime than others. This theory focuses on the relative emphasis placed on cultural goals and the institutionalized norms for achieving these goals. Societies that place a high relative emphasis on goals (like monetary success) and a low relative emphasis on the norms or rules for goal achievement have higher crime rates. Such societies are characterized by a state of anomie or normlessness, where the goal-seeking behavior of individuals is subject to little regulation. As a consequence, individuals employ the most expedient means—including crime—to achieve their goals. The United States is said to be such a society in which the goal of monetary success is stressed for everyone, but in which there is little emphasis on the norms regulating the achievement of this goal.

The second part of the article describes what may be termed Merton's "strain" theory. He argues that some individuals and groups within a society are subject to special pressure for crime. While everyone is urged to strive for monetary success, lower-class individuals are frequently prevented from achieving such success through legitimate channels. As a result, they are under considerable strain or pressure. They may adapt to their strain in any one of the five ways listed by Merton. Certain of these adaptations involve crime, and Merton briefly discusses why some types of individuals are more likely to respond to strain with crime than others.

Merton's theory, particularly his strain theory, has been the subject of extensive commentary and research (for summaries, see Agnew, 1997, 2000; Akers et al., 2016; Baumer, 2007; Baumer and Gustafson, 2007; Burton and Cullen, 1992; Kornhauser, 1978; Kubrin et al., 2009). The evidence for his strain theory is mixed, although certain recent tests of this theory are promising (see Agnew, 2000; Agnew et al., 1996, 2008; Agnew and Passas, 1997; Baron, 2004; Cernkovich et al., 2000; Chamlin and Sanders, 2013; Pratt and Cullen, 2005). The evidence for his anomie theory is also mixed, although certain data suggest that crime is more common among those who place much emphasis on monetary success and little on the norms for achieving such success (see Baumer and Gustafson, 2007; Messner and Rosenfeld, 2012). Further, Merton's anomie theory is the direct inspiration for Rosenfeld and Messner's institutional-anomie theory, described in Chapter 13.

References

Agnew, Robert. 1997. "The Nature and Determinants of Strain: Another Look at Durkheim and Merton." In Nikos Passas and Robert Agnew (eds.), *The Future of Anomie Theory*, pp. 27–51. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

____. 2000. “Sources of Criminality: Strain and Subcultural Theories of Criminality.” In Joseph F. Sheley (ed.), *Criminology: A Contemporary Handbook*, 3rd edition, pp. 349–371. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Agnew, Robert, Francis T. Cullen, Velmer S. Burton, Jr., T. David Evans, and R. Gregory Dunaway. 1996. “A New Test of Classic Strain Theory.” *Justice Quarterly* **13**: 681–704.

Agnew, Robert and Nikos Passas. 1997. “Introduction.” In Robert Agnew and Nikos Passas (eds.), *The Future of Anomie Theory*, pp. 1–26. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Agnew, Robert, Shelley Keith Matthews, Jacob Bucher, Adria N. Welcher, and Corey Keyes. 2008. “Socioeconomic Status, Economic Problems, and Delinquency.” *Youth and Society* **40**:159–181.

Akers, Ronald L., Christine S. Sellers, and Wesley G. Jennings. 2016. *Criminological Theories*, 7th edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

Baron, Stephen W. 2004. “General Strain, Street Youth and Crime: A Test of Agnew’s Revised Theory.” *Criminology* **42**: 457–483.

Baumer, Eric P. 2007. “Untangling Research Puzzles in Merton’s Multilevel Anomie Theory.” *Theoretical Criminology* **11**: 63–93.

Baumer, Eric P. and Regan Gustafson. 2007. “Social Organization and Instrumental Crime: Assessing the Empirical Validity of Classic and Contemporary Anomie Theories.” *Criminology* **45**: 617–664.

Burton, Velmer S. and Francis T. Cullen. 1992. “The Empirical Status of Strain Theory.” *Journal of Crime and Justice* **15**(2): 1–30.

Cernkovich, Stephen A., Peggy C. Giordano, and Jennifer L. Rudolph. 2000. “Race, Crime, and the American Dream.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **37**: 131–170.

Chamlin, Mitchell B. and Beth A. Sanders. 2013. “Falsifying Merton’s Macro-Level Anomie Theory of Profit-Motivated Crime: A Research Note.” *Deviant Behavior* **34**: 961–972.

Cole, Stephen. 1975. “The Growth of Scientific Knowledge: Theories of Deviance as a Case Study.” In Lewis A. Coser (ed.), *The Idea of Social Structure: Papers in Honor of Robert K. Merton*, pp. 175–220. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Kornhauser, Ruth. 1978. *Social Sources of Delinquency*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kubrin, Charis E., Thomas D. Stucky, and Marvin D. Krohn. 2009. *Researching Theories of Crime and Deviance*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Messner, Steven F. and Richard Rosenfeld. 2012. “Institutional Anomie Theory: A Macro-Sociological Explanation of Crime.” In Marvin D. Krohn, Alan J. Lizotte, and Gina Penly Hall (eds.), *Handbook on Crime and Deviance*, pp. 209–224. New York: Springer.

Pratt, Travis C. and Francis T. Cullen. 2005. “Assessing Macro-Level Predictors and Theories of Crime: A Meta-Analysis.” *Crime and Justice* **32**: 373–450.

There persists a notable tendency in sociological theory to attribute the malfunctioning of social structure primarily to those of man’s imperious biological drives which are not adequately restrained by social control. In this view, the social order is solely a device for “impulse management” and the “social processing” of tensions. These impulses which break through social control, be it noted, are held to be biologically derived. Nonconformity is assumed to be rooted in original nature. Conformity is by implication the result of an utilitarian calculus or unreasoned conditioning. This point of view, whatever its other deficiencies, clearly begs one question. It provides no basis for determining the nonbiological conditions which induce deviations from prescribed patterns of conduct. In this

paper, it will be suggested that certain phases of social structure generate the circumstances in which infringement of social codes constitutes a "normal" response.

The conceptual scheme to be outlined is designed to provide a coherent, systematic approach to the study of sociocultural sources of deviate behavior. Our primary aim lies in discovering how some social structures *exert a definite pressure* upon certain persons in the society to engage in nonconformist rather than conformist conduct. The many ramifications of the scheme cannot all be discussed; the problems mentioned outnumber those explicitly treated.

Among the elements of social and cultural structure, two are important for our purposes. These are analytically separable although they merge imperceptibly in concrete situations. The first consists of culturally defined goals, purposes, and interests. It comprises a frame of aspirational reference. These goals are more or less integrated and involve varying degrees of prestige and sentiment. They constitute a basic, but not the exclusive, component of what Linton aptly has called "designs for group living." Some of these cultural aspirations are related to the original drives of man, but they are not determined by them. The second phase of the social structure defines, regulates, and controls the acceptable modes of achieving these goals. Every social group invariably couples its scale of desired ends with moral or institutional regulation of permissible and required procedures for attaining these ends. These regulatory norms and moral imperatives do not necessarily coincide with technical or efficiency norms. Many procedures which from the standpoint of *particular individuals* would be most efficient in securing desired values, e.g., illicit oil-stock schemes, theft, fraud, are ruled out of the institutional area of permitted conduct. The choice of expedients is limited by the institutional norms.

To say that these two elements, culture goals and institutional norms, operate jointly is not to say that the ranges of alternative behaviors and aims bear some constant relation to one another. The emphasis upon certain goals may vary independently of the degree of emphasis upon institutional means. There may develop a disproportionate, at times, a virtually exclusive, stress upon the value of specific goals, involving relatively slight concern with the institutionally appropriate modes of attaining these goals. The limiting case in this direction is reached when the range of alternative procedures is limited only by technical rather than institutional considerations. Any and all devices which promise attainment of the all important goal would be permitted in this hypothetical polar case. This constitutes one type of cultural malintegration. A second polar type is found in groups where activities originally conceived as instrumental are transmuted into ends in themselves. The original purposes are forgotten and ritualistic adherence to institutionally prescribed conduct becomes virtually obsessive. Stability is largely ensured while change is flouted. The range of alternative behaviors is severely limited. There develops a tradition-bound, sacred society characterized by neophobia. The occupational psychosis of the bureaucrat may be cited as a case in point. Finally, there are the intermediate types of groups where a balance between culture goals and institutional means is maintained. These are the significantly integrated and relatively stable, though changing, groups.

An effective equilibrium between the two phases of the social structure is maintained as long as satisfactions accrue to individuals who conform to both constraints, viz., satisfactions from the achievement of the goals and satisfactions emerging directly from the institutionally canalized modes of striving to attain these ends. Success, in such equilibrated cases, is twofold. Success is reckoned in terms of the product and in terms of the process, in terms of the outcome and in terms of activities. Continuing satisfactions must derive from sheer *participation* in a competitive order as well as from eclipsing one's competitors if the order itself is to be sustained. The occasional sacrifices involved in institutionalized conduct must be compensated by socialized rewards. The distribution of statuses and roles through competition must be so organized that positive incentives for conformity to roles and adherence to status obligations are provided *for every position* within the distributive order. Aberrant conduct, therefore, may be viewed as a symptom of dissociation between culturally defined aspirations and socially structured means.

Of the types of groups which result from the independent variation of the two phases of the social structure, we shall be primarily concerned with the first, namely, that involving a disproportionate accent on goals. This statement must be recast in a proper perspective. In no group is there an absence of regulatory codes governing conduct, yet groups do vary in the degree to which these folkways, mores, and institutional controls are effectively integrated with the more diffuse goals which are part of the culture matrix. Emotional convictions may cluster about the complex of socially acclaimed ends, meanwhile shifting their support from the culturally defined implementation of these ends. As we shall see, certain aspects of the social structure may generate countermores and antisocial behavior precisely because of differential emphases on goals and regulations. In the extreme case, the latter may be so vitiated by the goal-emphasis that the range of behavior is limited only by considerations of technical expediency. The sole significant question then becomes, which available means is most efficient in netting the socially approved value. The technically most feasible procedure, whether legitimate or not, is preferred to the institutionally prescribed conduct. As this process continues, the integration of the society becomes tenuous and anomie ensues.

Thus, in competitive athletics, when the aim of victory is shorn of its institutional trappings and success in contests becomes construed as "winning the game" rather than "winning through circumscribed modes of activity," a premium is implicitly set upon the use of illegitimate but technically efficient means. The star of the opposing football team is surreptitiously slugged; the wrestler furtively incapacitates his opponent through ingenious but illicit techniques; university alumni covertly subsidize "students" whose talents are largely confined to the athletic field. The emphasis on the goal has so attenuated the satisfactions deriving from sheer participation in the competitive activity that these satisfactions are virtually confined to a successful outcome. Through the same process, tension generated by the desire to win in a poker game is relieved by successfully dealing oneself four aces, or, when the cult of success has become completely dominant, by sagaciously shuffling the cards in a game of solitaire. The faint twinge of uneasiness in the last instance and the surreptitious nature of public delicts indicate clearly that the institutional rules of the game *are known* to those who evade them, but that the emotional supports of these rules are largely vitiated by cultural exaggeration of the success-goal. They are microcosmic images of the social macrocosm.

Of course, this process is not restricted to the realm of sport. The process whereby exaltation of the end generates a *literal demoralization*, i.e., a deinstitutionalization, of the means is one which characterizes many groups in which the two phases of the social structure are not highly integrated. The extreme emphasis upon the accumulation of wealth as a symbol of success in our own society militates against the completely effective control of institutionally regulated modes of acquiring a fortune. Fraud, corruption, vice, crime, in short, the entire catalogue of proscribed behavior, becomes increasingly common when the emphasis on the *culturally induced* success-goal becomes divorced from a coordinated institutional emphasis. This observation is of crucial theoretical importance in examining the doctrine that antisocial behavior most frequently derives from biological drives breaking through the restraints imposed by society. The difference is one between a strictly utilitarian interpretation which conceives man's ends as random and an analysis which finds these ends deriving from the basic values of the culture.

Our analysis can scarcely stop at this juncture. We must turn to other aspects of the social genesis of the varying rates and types of deviate behavior characteristic of different societies. Thus far, we have sketched three ideal types of social orders constituted by distinctive patterns of relations between culture ends and means. Turning from these types of *culture patterning*, we find five logically possible, alternative modes of adjustment or adaptation *by individuals* within the culture-bearing society or group. These are schematically presented in Table 11.1, where (+) signifies "acceptance," (–) signifies "elimination" and (±) signifies "rejection and substitution of new goals and standards."

TABLE 11.1 Typology of Adaptations

	Culture Goals	Institutionalized Means
I. Conformity	+	+
II. Innovation	+	–
III. Ritualism	–	+
IV. Retreatism	–	–
V. Rebellion	±	±

Our discussion of the relation between these alternative responses and other phases of the social structure must be prefaced by the observation that persons may shift from one alternative to another as they engage in different social activities. These categories refer to role adjustments in specific situations, not to personality *in toto*. To treat the development of this process in various spheres of conduct would introduce a complexity unmanageable within the confines of this paper. For this reason, we shall be concerned primarily with economic activity in the broad sense, "the production, exchange, distribution and consumption of goods and services" in our competitive society, wherein wealth has taken on a highly symbolic cast. Our task is to search out some of the factors which exert pressure upon individuals to engage in certain of these logically possible alternative responses. This choice, as we shall see, is far from random.

In every society, Adaptation I (conformity to both culture goals and means) is the most common and widely diffused. Were this not so, the stability and continuity of the society could not be maintained. The mesh of expectancies which constitutes every social order is sustained by the modal behavior of its members falling within the first category. Conventional role behavior oriented toward the basic values of the group is the rule rather than the exception. It is this fact alone which permits us to speak of a human aggregate as comprising a group or society.

Conversely, Adaptation IV (rejection of goals and means) is the least common. Persons who "adjust" (or maladjust) in this fashion are, strictly speaking, in the society but not *of it*. Sociologically, these constitute the true "aliens." Not sharing the common frame of orientation, they can be included within the societal population merely in a fictional sense. In this category are *some* of the activities of psychotics, psychoneurotics, chronic autists, pariahs, outcasts, vagrants, vagabonds, tramps, chronic drunkards and drug addicts. These have relinquished, in certain spheres of activity, the culturally defined goals, involving complete aim-inhibition in the polar case, and their adjustments are not in accord with institutional norms. This is not to say that in some cases the source of their behavioral adjustments is not in part the very social structure which they have in effect repudiated nor that their very existence within a social area does not constitute a problem for the socialized population.

This mode of "adjustment" occurs, as far as structural sources are concerned, when both the culture goals and institutionalized procedures have been assimilated thoroughly by the individual and imbued with affect and high positive value, but where those institutionalized procedures which promise a measure of successful attainment of the goals are not available to the individual. In such instances, there results a two-fold mental conflict insofar as the moral obligation for adopting institutional means conflicts with the pressure to resort to illegitimate means (which may attain the goal) and inasmuch as the individual is shut off from means which are both legitimate and effective. The competitive order is maintained, but the frustrated and handicapped individual who cannot cope with this order drops out. Defeatism, quietism, and resignation are manifested in escape mechanisms which ultimately lead the individual to "escape" from the requirements of the society. It is an expedient which arises from continued failure to attain the goal by legitimate measures and from an inability to adopt the illegitimate route because of internalized prohibitions and institutionalized compulsives, *during which process the supreme value of the success-goal has as*

yet not been renounced. The conflict is resolved by eliminating both precipitating elements, the goals and means. The escape is complete, the conflict is eliminated and the individual is socialized.

Be it noted that where frustration derives from the inaccessibility of effective institutional means for attaining economic or any other type of highly valued "success," that Adaptations II, III and V (innovation, ritualism and rebellion) are also possible. The result will be determined by the particular personality, and thus, the *particular* cultural background, involved. Inadequate socialization will result in the innovation response whereby the conflict and frustration are eliminated by relinquishing the institutional means and retaining the success-aspiration; an extreme will lead to ritualism wherein the goal is dropped as beyond one's reach but conformity to the mores persists; and rebellion occurs when emancipation from the reigning standards, due to frustration or to marginalist perspectives, leads to the attempt to introduce a "new social order."

Our major concern is with the illegitimacy adjustment. This involves the use of conventionally proscribed but frequently effective means of attaining at least the simulacrum of culturally defined success—wealth, power, and the like. As we have seen, this adjustment occurs when the individual has assimilated the cultural emphasis on success without equally internalizing the morally prescribed norms governing means for its attainment. The question arises, Which phases of our social structure predispose toward this mode of adjustment? We may examine a concrete instance, effectively analyzed by Lohman, which provides a clue to the answer. Lohman has shown that specialized areas of vice in the near north side of Chicago constitute a "normal" response to a situation where the cultural emphasis upon pecuniary success has been absorbed, but where there is little access to conventional and legitimate means for attaining such success. The conventional occupational opportunities of persons in this area are almost completely limited to manual labor. Given our cultural stigmatization of manual labor, and its correlate, the prestige of white collar work, it is clear that the result is a strain toward innovational practices. The limitation of opportunity to unskilled labor and the resultant low income can not compete *in terms of conventional standards of achievement* with the high income from organized vice.

For our purposes, this situation involves two important features. First, such antisocial behavior is in a sense "called forth" by certain conventional values of the culture and by the class structure involving differential access to the approved opportunities for legitimate, prestige-bearing pursuit of the culture goals. The lack of high integration between the means-and-end elements of the cultural pattern and the particular class structure combine to favor a heightened frequency of antisocial conduct in such groups. The second consideration is of equal significance. Recourse to the first of the alternative responses, legitimate effort, is limited by the fact that actual advance toward desired success-symbols through conventional channels is, despite our persisting open-class ideology, relatively rare and difficult for those handicapped by little formal education and few economic resources. The dominant pressure of group standards of success is, therefore, on the gradual attenuation of legitimate, but by and large ineffective, strivings and the increasing use of illegitimate, but more or less effective, expedients of vice and crime. The cultural demands made on persons in this situation are incompatible. On the one hand, they are asked to orient their conduct toward the prospect of accumulating wealth and on the other, they are largely denied effective opportunities to do so institutionally. The consequences of such structural inconsistency are psychopathological personality, and/or antisocial conduct, and/or revolutionary activities. The equilibrium between culturally designated means and ends becomes highly unstable with the progressive emphasis on attaining the prestige-laden ends by any means whatsoever. Within this context, Capone represents the triumph of amoral intelligence over morally prescribed "failure," when the channels of vertical mobility are closed or narrowed *in a society which places a high premium on economic affluence and social ascent for all its members*.

This last qualification is of primary importance. It suggests that other phases of the social structure besides the extreme emphasis on pecuniary success, must be considered if we are to understand the social sources of antisocial

behavior. A high frequency of deviate behavior is not generated simply by "lack of opportunity" or by this exaggerated pecuniary emphasis. A comparatively rigidified class structure, a feudalistic or caste order, may limit such opportunities far beyond the point which obtains in our society today. It is only when a system of cultural values extols, virtually above all else, certain *common* symbols of success *for a considerable part of the same population*, that antisocial behavior ensues on a considerable scale. In other words, our egalitarian ideology denies by implication the existence of noncompeting groups and individuals in the pursuit of pecuniary success. The same body of success-symbols is held to be desirable for all. These goals are held to *transcend class lines*, not to be bounded by them, yet the actual social organization is such that there exist class differentials in the accessibility of these *common* success-symbols. Frustration and thwarted aspiration lead to the search for avenues of escape from a culturally induced intolerable situation; or unrelieved ambition may eventuate in illicit attempts to acquire the dominant values. The American stress on pecuniary success and ambitiousness for all thus invites exaggerated anxieties, hostilities, neuroses and antisocial behavior.

This theoretical analysis may go far toward explaining the varying correlations between crime and poverty. Poverty is not an isolated variable. It is one in a complex of interdependent social and cultural variables. When viewed in such a context, it represents quite different states of affairs. Poverty as such, and consequent limitation of opportunity, are not sufficient to induce a conspicuously high rate of criminal behavior. Even the often mentioned "poverty in the midst of plenty" will not necessarily lead to this result. Only insofar as poverty and associated disadvantages in competition for the culture values approved for all members of the society is linked with the assimilation of a cultural emphasis on monetary accumulation as a symbol of success is antisocial conduct a "normal" outcome. Thus, poverty is less highly correlated with crime in southeastern Europe than in the United States. The possibilities of vertical mobility in these European areas would seem to be fewer than in this country, so that neither poverty per se nor its association with limited opportunity is sufficient to account for the varying correlations. It is only when the full configuration is considered, poverty, limited opportunity and a commonly shared system of success symbols, that we can explain the higher association between poverty and crime in our society than in others where rigidified class structure is coupled with *differential class symbols of achievement*.

In societies such as our own, then, the pressure of prestige-bearing success tends to eliminate the effective social constraint over means employed to this end. "The-end-justifies-the-means" doctrine becomes a guiding tenet for action when the cultural structure unduly exalts the end and the social organization unduly limits possible recourse to approved means. Otherwise put, this notion and associated behavior reflect a lack of cultural coordination. In international relations, the effects of this lack of integration are notoriously apparent. An emphasis upon national power is not readily coordinated with an inept organization of legitimate, i.e., internationally defined and accepted, means for attaining this goal. The result is a tendency toward the abrogation of international law, treaties become scraps of paper, "undeclared warfare" serves as a technical evasion, the bombing of civilian populations is rationalized just as the same societal situation induces the same sway of illegitimacy among individuals.

The social order we have described necessarily produces this "strain toward dissolution." The pressure of such an order is upon outdoing one's competitors. The choice of means within the ambit of institutional control will persist as long as the sentiments supporting a competitive system, i.e., deriving from the possibility of outranking competitors and hence enjoying the favorable response of others, are distributed throughout the entire system of activities and are not confined merely to the final result. A stable social structure demands a balanced distribution of affect among its various segments. When there occurs a shift of emphasis from the satisfactions deriving from competition itself to almost exclusive concern with successful competition, the resultant stress leads to the breakdown of the regulatory structure. With the resulting attenuation of the institutional imperatives, there occurs an approximation of the situation erroneously held by utilitarians to be typical of society generally wherein calculations of advantage and fear of punishment are the sole regulating agencies. In such situations, as Hobbes observed, force and fraud come to

constitute the sole virtues in view of their relative efficiency in attaining goals—which were for him, of course, not culturally derived.

It should be apparent that the foregoing discussion is not pitched on a moralistic plane. Whatever the sentiments of the writer or reader concerning the ethical desirability of coordinating the means-and-goals phases of the social structure, one must agree that lack of such coordination leads to anomie. Insofar as one of the most general functions of social organization is to provide a basis for calculability and regularity of behavior, it is increasingly limited in effectiveness as these elements of the structure become dissociated. At the extreme, predictability virtually disappears and what may be properly termed cultural chaos or anomie intervenes.

This statement, being brief, is also incomplete. It has not included an exhaustive treatment of the various structural elements which predispose toward one rather than another of the alternative responses open to individuals; it has neglected, but not denied the relevance of, the factors determining the specific incidence of these responses; it has not enumerated the various concrete responses which are constituted by combinations of specific values of the analytical variables; it has omitted, or included only by implication, any consideration of the social functions performed by illicit responses; it has not tested the full explanatory power of the analytical scheme by examining a large number of group variations in the frequency of deviate and conformist behavior; it has not adequately dealt with rebellious conduct which seeks to refashion the social framework radically; it has not examined the relevance of cultural conflict for an analysis of culture-goal and institutional-means malintegration. It is suggested that these and related problems may be profitably analyzed by this scheme.

---

* Reprinted with permission from Robert K. Merton, “Social Structure and Anomie” in the *American Sociological Review* 3 (October). Copyright © 1938 by the American Sociological Review.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe the "cultural goals" and "institutional norms" that exist at your school. Are these goals and norms in "balance"?
2. Describe the "adaptations" that individuals might employ when they cannot achieve the cultural goals emphasized at your school.
3. What factors determine whether individuals will choose adaptations that may involve crime, like innovation?
4. Would Merton argue that poverty, in and of itself, is a cause of crime?
5. What policy recommendations might Merton make for controlling crime?

12.
Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang*

Albert K. Cohen

Cohen was a student of both Robert Merton and Edwin Sutherland. Like Sutherland, Cohen was interested in delinquent subcultures, particularly the lower-working-class urban gangs that were the subject of much attention during the 1950s. While a student of Sutherland, Cohen posed a question for which Sutherland did not have an adequate answer: How can we explain the origin and content of delinquent subcultures? Cohen drew heavily on Merton's strain theory to provide his own answer to this question, which is outlined in the following selection from his book Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang. *In the first part of the selection, Cohen provides a general explanation for the origin of deviant subcultures. In the second part of the selection, Cohen applies this theory to explain the origin and content of male, working-class urban gangs.*

In reading the selection, note the similarities and differences with Merton's strain theory. Like Merton, Cohen argues that delinquency is ultimately caused by goal blockage. Cohen, however, argues that lower-class and working-class boys are not simply concerned with the goal of monetary success. Rather, they want to achieve the broader goal of middle-class status, which involves respect from others as well as financial success. This difference in goals is crucial. One can achieve financial success through illegitimate channels like theft (Merton's adaptation of innovation). One cannot, however, achieve middle-class status through the same channels (one cannot steal middle-class status). As a consequence, lower-class and working-class boys often adapt to their goal blockage by setting up an alternative status system in which they can achieve success (this is similar to Merton's adaptation of rebellion, in which new goals and means are substituted for the old ones). The hostility of lower-class and working-class boys toward the middle class, among other things, leads them to set up a status system that values everything the middle class rejects. The middle-class values private property and respect for the individual, for example, while the delinquent gang values the destruction and theft of property and aggression against others. Cohen thus explains the origin and content of the delinquent subculture.

Certain features of Cohen's theory have been criticized (see Akers et al., 2016). Theorists such as Cloward and Ohlin (1960) and Sykes and Matza (Chapter 15) claim that the values of delinquents are not as opposed to conventional values as Cohen claims. The data tend to support this argument (see Agnew, 2000). Nevertheless, Cohen's use of strain theory to explain the origin of deviant subcultures is a fundamental contribution to the crime literature (see Agnew and Kaufman, 2010, for further discussion).

References

Agnew, Robert. 2000. "Sources of Criminality: Strain and Subcultural Theories." In Joseph F. Sheley (ed.), *Criminology: A Contemporary Handbook*, 3rd edition, pp. 349–371. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Agnew, Robert and Joanne M. Kaufman, eds. 2010. *Anomie, Strain, and Subcultural Theories of Crime*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate.

Akers, Ronald L., Christine S. Sellers, and Wesley G. Jennings. 2016. *Criminological Theories: Introduction and Evaluation*, 7th edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

Cloward, Richard A. and Lloyd E. Ohlin. 1960. *Delinquency and Opportunity*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

When we speak of a delinquent subculture, we speak of a way of life that has somehow become traditional among certain groups in American society. These groups are the boys' gangs that flourish most conspicuously in the "delinquency neighborhoods" of our larger American cities. The members of these gangs grow up, some to become law-abiding citizens and others to graduate to more professional and adult forms of criminality, but the delinquent tradition is kept alive by the age-groups that succeed them. This book is an attempt to answer some important questions about this delinquent subculture....

Why is there such a subculture? Why is it "there" to be "taken over"? Why does it have the particular content that it does and why is it distributed as it is within our social system? Why does it arise and persist, as it is within our social system? Why does it arise and persist, as it does, in such dependable fashion in certain neighborhoods of our American cities? Why does it not "diffuse" to other areas and to other classes of our population? ...

---

* Reprinted with the permission of The Free Press, a division of Simon & Schuster, from *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang* by Albert K. Cohen. Copyright © 1955 by The Free Press; copyright renewed 1983 by Albert K. Cohen.

Action Is Problem-Solving

Our point of departure is the “psychogenic” assumption that all human action—not delinquency alone—is an ongoing series of efforts to solve problems. By “problems” we do not only mean the worries and dilemmas that bring people to the psychiatrist and the psychological clinic. Whether or not to accept a proffered drink, which of two ties to buy, what to do about the unexpected guest or the “F” in algebra are problems too. They all involve, until they are resolved, a certain tension, a disequilibrium and a challenge. We hover between doing and not doing, doing this or doing that, doing it one way or doing it another. Each choice is an act, each act is a choice. Not every act is a *successful* solution, for our choice may leave us with unresolved tensions or generate new and unanticipated consequences which pose new problems, but is at least an attempt at a solution. On the other hand, not every problem need imply distress, anxiety, bedevilment. Most problems are familiar and recurrent and we have at hand for them ready solutions, habitual modes of action which we have found efficacious and acceptable both to ourselves and to our neighbours. Other problems, however, are not so readily resolved. They persist, they nag, and they press for novel solutions....

We seek, if possible, solutions which will settle old problems and not create new ones. A first requirement, then, of a wholly acceptable solution is that it be acceptable to those on whose cooperation and good will we are dependent. This immediately imposes sharp limits on the range of creativity and innovation. Our dependence upon our social milieu provides us with a strong incentive to select our solutions from among those already established and known to be congenial to our fellows....

We see then why, both on the levels of overt action and of the supporting frame of reference, there are powerful incentives not to deviate from the ways established in our groups. Should our problems be not capable of solution in ways acceptable to our groups and should they be sufficiently pressing, we are not so likely to strike out on our own as we are to shop around for a group with a different subculture, with a frame of reference we find more congenial. One fascinating aspect of the social process is the continual realignment of groups, the migration of individuals from one group to another in the unconscious quest for a social milieu favorable to the resolution of their problems of adjustment.

How Subcultural Solutions Arise

Now we confront a dilemma and a paradox. We have seen how difficult it is for the individual to cut loose from the culture models in his milieu, how his dependence upon his fellows compels him to seek conformity and to avoid innovation. But these models and precedents which we call the surrounding culture are ways in which other people think and other people act, and these other people are likewise constrained by models in *their* milieux. *These models themselves, however, continually change*. How is it possible for cultural innovations to emerge while each of the participants in the culture is so powerfully motivated to conform to what is already established? This is the central theoretical problem of this book.

The crucial condition for the emergence of new cultural forms is the existence, *in effective interaction with one another, of a number of actors with similar problems of adjustment*. These may be the entire membership of a group or only certain members, similarly circumstanced, within the group. Among the conceivable solutions to their problems may be one which is not yet embodied in action and which does not therefore exist as a cultural model. This solution, except for the fact that it does not already carry the social criteria of validity and promise the social rewards of consensus, might well answer more neatly to the problems of this group and appeal to its members more effectively than any of the solutions already institutionalized. For each participant, this solution would be adjustive and adequately motivated provided that he could anticipate a simultaneous and corresponding transformation in the frames of reference of his fellows. Each would welcome a sign from the others that a new departure in this direction would receive approval and support. But how does one *know* whether a gesture toward innovation will strike a responsive and sympathetic chord in others or whether it will elicit hostility, ridicule and punishment? *Potential* concurrence is always problematical and innovation or the impulse to innovate a stimulus for anxiety.

The paradox is resolved when the innovation is broached in such a manner as to elicit from others reactions suggesting their receptivity; and when, at the same time, the innovation occurs by increments so small, tentative and ambiguous as to permit the actor to retreat, if the signs be unfavorable, without having become identified with an unpopular position. Perhaps all social actions have, in addition to their instrumental, communicative and expressive functions, this quality of being *exploratory gestures*. For the actor with problems of adjustment which cannot be resolved within the frame of reference of the established culture, each response of the other to what the actor says and does is a clue to the directions in which change may proceed further in a way congenial to the other and to the direction in which change will lack social support. And if the probing gesture is motivated by tensions common to other participants it is likely to initiate a process of *mutual* exploration and *joint* elaboration of a new solution. My exploratory gesture functions as a cue to you; your exploratory gesture as a cue to me....

The final product, to which we are jointly committed, is likely to be a compromise formation of all the participants to what we may call a cultural process, a formation perhaps unanticipated by any of them....

Subcultural Solutions to Status Problems

One variant of this cultural process interests us especially because it provides the model for our explanation of the delinquent subculture. Status problems are problems of achieving respect in the eyes of one's fellows. Our ability to achieve status depends upon the criteria of status applied by our fellows, that is, the standards or norms they go by in evaluating people. These criteria are an aspect of their cultural frames of reference. If we lack the characteristics or capacities which give status in terms of these criteria, we are beset by one of the most typical and yet distressing of human problems of adjustment. One solution is for individuals who share such problems to gravitate toward one another and jointly to establish new norms, new criteria of status which define as meritorious the characteristics they *do* possess, the kinds of conduct of which they *are* capable. It is clearly necessary for each participant, if the innovation is to solve his status problem, that these new criteria be shared with others, that the solution be a group and not a private solution. If he "goes it alone" he succeeds only in further estranging himself from his fellows. Such new status criteria would represent new subcultural values different from or even antithetical to those of the larger social system....

Insofar as the new subculture represents a new status system sanctioning behavior tabooed or frowned upon by the larger society, the acquisition of status within the new group is accompanied by a loss of status outside the group. To the extent that the esteem of outsiders is a value to the members of the group, a new problem is engendered. To this problem the typical solution is to devalue the good will and respect of those whose good will and respect are forfeit anyway. The new subculture of the community of innovators comes to include hostile and contemptuous images of those groups whose enmity they have earned. Indeed, this repudiation of outsiders, necessary in order to protect oneself from feeling concerned about what they may think, may go so far as to make nonconformity with the expectations of the outsiders a positive criterion of status within the group. Certain kinds of conduct, that is, become reputable precisely because they are disreputable in the eyes of the "out-group." ...

In conformity with the model we have proposed, we shall try to demonstrate that certain problems of adjustment tend, in consequence of the structure of American society, to occur most typically in those role sectors where the delinquent subculture is endemic. Then we shall try to show how the delinquent subculture provides a solution appropriate to those particular problems and to elaboration and perpetuation by social groups....

Growing Up in a Class System

In summary, it may confidently be said that the working-class boy, particularly if his training and values be those we have here defined as working-class, is more likely than his middle-class peers to find himself at the bottom of the status hierarchy whenever he moves in a middle-class world, whether it be of adults or of children. To the degree to which he values middle-class status, either because he values the good opinion of middle-class persons or because he has to some degree internalized middle-class standards himself, he faces a problem of adjustment and is in the market for a “solution.”

What the Delinquent Subculture Has to Offer

The delinquent subculture, we suggest, is a way of dealing with the problems of adjustment we have described. These problems are chiefly status problems: certain children are denied status in the respectable society because they cannot meet the criteria of the respectable status system. The delinquent subculture deals with these problems by providing criteria of status which these children *can* meet....

The hallmark of the delinquent subculture is the explicit and wholesale repudiation of middle-class standards and the adoption of their very antithesis....

It is precisely here, we suggest, in the refusal to temporize, that the appeal of the delinquent subculture lies. Let us recall that it is characteristically American, not specifically working-class or middle-class, to measure oneself against the widest possible status universe, to seek status against "all comers," to be "as good as" or "better than" anybody—anybody, that is, within one's own age and sex category. As long as the working-class corner-boy clings to a version, however attenuated and adulterated, of the middle-class culture, he must recognize his inferiority to working-class and middle-class college boys. The delinquent subculture, on the other hand, permits no ambiguity of the status of the delinquent relative to that of anybody else. In terms of the norms of the delinquent subculture, defined by its negative polarity to the respectable status system, the delinquent's very nonconformity to middle-class standards sets him above the most exemplary college boy.

Another important function of the delinquent subculture is the legitimation of aggression. We surmise that a certain amount of hostility is generated among working-class children against middle-class persons, with their airs of superiority, disdain or condescension and against middle-class norms, which are, in a sense, the cause of their status-frustration....

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How is Cohen's use of strain theory similar to and different from Merton's version of strain theory?
2. Describe the conditions necessary for a deviant subculture to emerge.
3. Describe the major "problem of adjustment" faced by working-class boys.
4. How does the delinquent subculture solve the problem of adjustment described above?

13.
Crime and the American Dream*

Richard Rosenfeld

Steven F. Messner

Merton's (1938) theory of "Social Structure and Anomie" is in two parts: The first part tries to explain why the United States has such a high rate of crime and the second tries to explain why some groups within the United States are more likely to engage in crime. Until Messner and Rosenfeld (2013) developed their institutional-anomie theory of crime, researchers largely neglected the first part of Merton's theory. Like Merton, Messner and Rosenfeld seek to explain the high rate of crime in the United States. They draw heavily on Merton's theory, arguing that our high crime rate stems partly from the fact that we encourage everyone to pursue the goal of monetary success but place little emphasis on the legitimate norms for achieving such success (as they state, "It's not how you play the game; it's whether you win or lose").

They also extend Merton's theory in a fundamental way. They argue that the cultural emphasis on monetary success is paralleled by the fact that the economy dominates the major institutions in our society, including the family, school, and polity. As Rosenfeld and Messner indicate in the following selection, the domination of the economy interferes with the effective functioning of these other institutions. As a result, these institutions are not able to adequately socialize or train individuals and sanction deviance. This further contributes to our high crime rate.

Messner and Rosenfeld's theory is important because it redirects our attention to the explanation of societal differences in crime rates. It also forces us to confront some very difficult issues: Are the basic values and organization of our society responsible for our high crime rate, and if so, what is to be done (see Messner and Rosenfeld, 2013, for a discussion of crime control strategies)?

References

Merton, Robert K. 1938. "Social Structure and Anomie." *American Sociological Review* **3**: 672–673.

Messner, Steven F. and Richard Rosenfeld. 2013. *Crime and the American Dream*, 5th edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

The obsession with crime in the United States cannot be dismissed as an irrational feature of the American character or as a peculiarly American penchant for inventing crime waves or using crime as a stage for enacting other social dramas. Rather, the American obsession with crime is rooted in an objective social reality. Levels of crime in the United States, and more specifically levels of serious crime, are in fact very high in comparative perspective....

We maintain that the comparatively high level of serious criminal behavior in the United States is one of the more important facts about crime to be explained by criminological theory (cf. Braithwaite 1989). Curiously, however, criminologists have devoted relatively little attention to this issue for at least two interrelated reasons: the dominance of individual-level perspectives in contemporary criminology and a corresponding deemphasis on serious forms of criminal behavior. Nonetheless, we propose that the foundations for an explanation of the distinctively high

levels of crime in the United States can be found in the arguments advanced by Robert Merton in his classic essay "Social Structure and Anomie" (1938, 1968; hereafter SS&A).

Merton proposes that the sources of crime in the United States lie in the same cultural commitments and social arrangements that are conventionally regarded as part of the American success story. High rates of crime are thus not simply the "sick" outcome of individual pathologies, such as defective personalities or aberrant biological structures. Nor are they the "evil consequence" of individual moral failings. Instead, crime in America derives in significant measure from highly prized cultural and social conditions—indeed, from the American Dream itself.

In this chapter, we offer an explanation of American crime rates that is based on an expanded version of Merton's theory. We amplify the theory in two ways. First, we restore the original macro-level intent and orientation to SS&A that were removed in the conversion of "anomie theory" into "strain theory." We then extend anomie theory by considering the connections between core elements of the American Dream, which Merton discussed in some detail, and an aspect of social structure to which he devoted little attention: the interrelationships among social institutions. Our basic thesis is that the anomic tendencies inherent in the American Dream both produce and are reproduced by an *institutional balance of power* dominated by the economy. The result of the interplay between the basic cultural commitments of the American Dream and the companion institutional arrangements is widespread anomie, weak social controls, and high levels of crime....

---

* Reprinted by permission of Transaction Publishers. "Crime and the American Dream" from *The Legacy of Anomie Theory*, vol. 6., Richard Rosenfeld and Steven F. Messner. Copyright © 1995 by Transaction Publishers.

The Anomie Tendencies of the American Dream

In SS&A, Merton advances the provocative argument that there are inherent features of American culture, of the American Dream itself, that ultimately contribute to the high rates of crime and deviance observed in the United States. Although Merton does not provide a formal definition of "the American Dream," it is possible to formulate a reasonably concise characterization of this cultural orientation on the basis of his discussion of American culture in general and his scattered references to the American Dream. The American Dream refers to a commitment to the goal of material success, to be pursued by everyone in society, under conditions of open, individual competition.

Merton proposes that the American Dream has been highly functional for society in certain respects. This cultural ethos is particularly effective in satisfying motivational requirements because it encourages high levels of "ambition" (Merton 1968: 200). At the same time, there is a dark side to the American Dream. It tends to promote an anomic imbalance wherein the importance of using the legitimate means is deemphasized relative to the importance of attaining the desired cultural goals.

Merton explains that this anomic tendency derives ultimately from the very same basic value commitments upon which the American Dream rests. One such commitment is a strong *achievement orientation*. In American society, personal worth tends to be evaluated on the basis of what people have achieved rather than who they are or how they relate to others in social networks. "Success" is to a large extent the ultimate measure of social worth. Quite understandably, then, there are pervasive cultural pressures to achieve at any cost. A strong achievement orientation, at the level of basic cultural values, thus cultivates and sustains a mentality that "it's not how you play the game; it's whether you win or lose."

A second basic value orientation that contributes to the anomic imbalance in American culture is *individualism*. In the pursuit of success, people are encouraged to "make it" on their own. Fellow members of society are thus competitors in the struggle for achievement and the ultimate validation of personal worth. This intense, individual competition to succeed further encourages a tendency to disregard normative restraints on behavior when these restraints interfere with the realization of goals. Andrew Hacker (1992: 29) offers a cogent description of this distinctive feature of American culture:

> America has always been the most competitive of societies. It poises its citizens against one another, with the warning that they must make it on their own. Hence the stress on moving past others, driven by a fear of falling behind. No other nation so rates its residents as winners or losers.

A third component of American culture that is conductive to anomic imbalance is its *universalism*. Everyone is encouraged to aspire to social ascent, and everyone is susceptible to evaluation on the basis of individual achievements. As a consequence, the pressures to "win" are pervasive; no one is exempt from the pursuit of success (Merton 1968: 200; Orru 1990: 234).

Finally, in American culture, success is signified in a special way: by the accumulation of *monetary rewards*. Merton is keenly aware of the high priority awarded to money in American culture. He observes that

> in some large measure, money has been consecrated as a value in itself, over and above its expenditure for articles of consumption or its use for the enhancement of power. (1968: 190)

Merton's key point is not that Americans are uniquely materialistic; a strong interest in material well-being can be found in most societies. Rather, the distinctive feature of American culture is the preeminent role of money as the

"metric" of success. As Orru puts it, "money is literally, in this context, a *currency* for measuring achievement" (1990: 235).

Merton points to an important implication of the signification of achievement with reference to monetary rewards. Monetary success is inherently open-ended. Because it is always possible in principle to have more money, "in the American Dream there is no final stopping point" (1968: 190). Cultural prescriptions thus mandate "never-ending achievement" (Passas 1990: 159). Relentless pressures to accumulate money, in turn, encourage people to disregard normative restraints when they impede the pursuit of personal goals.

In sum, dominant value patterns of American culture, specifically its achievement orientation, its competitive individualism, its universalism in goal orientations and evaluative standards—when harnessed to the preeminent goal of monetary success—give rise to a distinctive cultural ethos: the American Dream. The American Dream, in turn, encourages members of society to pursue ends, in Merton's words, "limited only by considerations of technical expediency" (1968: 189). One consequence of this open, widespread, competitive, and anomic quest for success by any means necessary is high levels of crime….

Merton's cultural critique represents only a partial explanation of the high levels of crime in the United States considered in comparative perspective. A complete explanation requires identification of the social structural underpinnings of American culture and its associated strains toward anomie. Merton's analysis stops short of an explication of the ways in which specific features of the institutional structure—beyond the class system—interrelate to generate the anomic pressures that are held to be responsible for crime (cf. Cohen 1985: 233). As a consequence, the anomie perspective is best regarded [as] a "work in progress." In Cohen's words, Merton

> has laid the groundwork for an explanation of deviance [and crime] on the sociological level, but the task, for the most part, still lies ahead. (1985: 233)

The Institutional Dynamics of Crime

The Normal Functions of Social Institutions

Social institutions are the building blocks of whole societies. As such, they constitute the fundamental units of macro-level analysis. Institutions are "relatively stable sets of norms and values, statuses and roles, and groups and organizations" that regulate human conduct to meet the basic needs of a society (Bassis, Gelles, and Levine 1991: 142). These social needs include the need to adapt to the environment, to mobilize and deploy resources for the achievement of collective goals, and to socialize members in the society's fundamental normative patterns.

Adaptation to the environment is the primary responsibility of economic institutions, which organize the production and distribution of goods and services to satisfy the basic material requirements for human existence. The political system, or "polity," mobilizes and distributes power to attain collective goals. One collective purpose of special importance is the maintenance of public safety. Political institutions are responsible for

> protecting members of society from invasions from without, controlling crime and disorder within, and providing channels for resolving conflicts of interest. (Bassis, Gelles, and Levine 1991: 142)

The institution of the family has primary responsibility for the maintenance and replacement of members of society. These tasks involve setting the limits of legitimate sexual relations among adults; the physical care and nurturing of children; and the socialization of children into the values, goals, and beliefs of the dominant culture. In addition, a particularly important function of the family in modern societies is to provide emotional support for its members. To a significant degree, the family serves as a refuge from the tensions and stresses generated in other institutional domains. In this idea of the family as a "haven" from the rigors of the public world lies the implicit recognition of the need to counterbalance and temper the harsh, competitive conditions of public life (Lasch 1977).

The institution of education shares many of the socialization functions of the family. Like the family, schools are given responsibility for transmitting basic cultural standards to new generations. In modern industrial societies, schools are also oriented toward the specific task of preparing youth for the demands of adult occupational roles. In addition, education is intended to enhance personal adjustment, facilitate the development of individual human potential, and advance the general "knowledge base" of the culture.

These four social institutions—the economy, polity, family, and education—are the focus of our explanation of crime. They do not, of course, exhaust the institutional structure of modern societies, nor are they the only institutions with relevance to crime. However, the interconnections among these four institutions are central to an institutional analysis of crime in modern societies, in general, and of the exceptionally high levels of crime in the United States, in particular.

Social institutions are to some extent distinct with respect to the primary activities around which they are organized. At the same time, however, the functions of institutions are overlapping and interdependent. For example, the performance of the economy is dependent on the quality of the "human capital" (i.e., the motivations, knowledge, and skills) cultivated in the schools. The capacity of the schools to develop human capital is circumscribed by the individual backgrounds, what Pierre Bourdieu refers to as the "cultural capital," that students bring with them from their families (MacLeod 1987: 11–14). The effective functioning of all three of these institutions—the economy, education, and the family—presupposes an environment with at least a modicum of social order, for which the polity

is largely responsible. Finally, the capacity of the polity to promote the collective good depends on the nature and quality of economic and human resources supplied by the other institutions.

The interdependence of major social institutions implies that some coordination and cooperation among institutions is required for societies to "work" at all. The requirements for the effective functioning of any given institution, however, may conflict with the requirements of another. This potential for conflict is illustrated by the particularly stark contrast between the dominant values embodied in two institutions: the economy and the family.

Economic life and family life are supposed to be governed by fundamentally different standards in modern industrial societies. Family relationships are expected to be regulated by the norm of particularism, and positions and roles in the family are allocated, in large measure, on the basis of ascribed characteristics. Each member is entitled to special considerations by virtue of his or her unique identity and position in the family. In contrast, economic relationships, such as transactions in the marketplace, are supposed to entail universalistic orientations, and economic positions are supposed to be filled according to achievement criteria. Persons who occupy the same or functionally equivalent statuses are to be treated similarly, and access to these statuses is supposed to be gained by demonstrating the capacity to successfully perform their duties and responsibilities. There is thus an inevitable tension between the kinds of normative orientations required for the effective functioning of the family and those required for the efficient operation of a market economy.

Any given society will therefore be characterized by a distinctive arrangement of social institutions that reflects a balancing of the sometimes competing claims and requisites of the different institutions, yielding a distinctive institutional balance of power. Further, the nature of the resulting configuration of institutions is itself intimately related to the larger culture. Indeed, our basic premise about social organization is that culture and the institutional balance of power are mutually reinforcing. On the one hand, culture influences the character of institutions and their positions relative to one another. Culture is in a sense "given life" in the institutional structure of society. On the other hand, the patterns of social relationships constituting institutions, which Parsons (1964: 239) terms the "backbone" of the social system, reproduce and sustain cultural commitments. This is, ultimately, where culture "comes from."

In the macrocriminological analysis of a concrete social system, then, the task is to describe the interpenetration of cultural and institutional patterns, to trace the resulting interconnections among institutions that constitute the institutional balance of power, and finally, to show how the institutional balance of power influences levels of crime. In the following sections, we apply this kind of analysis to the relationships among culture, institutional functioning, and crime in the United States.

The American Dream and the Institutional Balance of Power

... The core elements of the American Dream—a strong achievement orientation, a commitment to competitive individualism, universalism, and most important, the glorification of material success—have their institutional underpinnings in the economy. The most important feature of the economy of the United States is its capitalist nature. The defining characteristics of any capitalist economy are private ownership and control of property, and free market mechanisms for the production and distribution of goods and services.

These structural arrangements are conducive to, and presuppose, certain cultural orientations. For the economy to operate efficiently, the private owners of property must be profit-oriented and eager to invest, and workers must be willing to exchange their labor for wages. The motivational mechanism underlying these conditions is the promise of financial returns. The internal logic of a capitalist economy thus presumes that an attraction to monetary rewards as a result of achievement in the marketplace is widely diffused throughout the population (cf. Passas 1990: 159).

A capitalist economy is also highly competitive for all those involved, property owners and workers alike. Firms that are unable to adapt to shifting consumer demands or to fluctuations in the business cycle are likely to fail. Workers who are unable to keep up with changing skill requirements or who are unproductive in comparison with others are likely to be fired. This intense competition discourages economic actors from being wedded to conventional ways of doing things and instead encourages them to substitute new techniques for traditional ones if they offer advantages in meeting economic goals. In short, a capitalist economy naturally cultivates a competitive, innovative spirit.

These structural and cultural conditions are common to all capitalist societies. What is distinctive about the United States, however, is the *exaggerated* emphasis on monetary success and the *unrestrained* receptivity to innovation. The goal of monetary success overwhelms other goals and becomes the principal measuring rod for achievements. The resulting proclivity and pressures to innovate resist any regulation that is not justified by purely technical considerations. The obvious question that arises is why cultural orientations that express the inherent logic of capitalism have evolved to a particularly extreme degree in American society. The answer, we submit, lies in the inability of other social institutions to tame economic imperatives. In short, the institutional balance of power is tilted toward the economy....

Capitalism developed in the United States without the institutional restraints found in other societies. As a consequence, the economy assumed an unusual dominance in the institutional structure of society from the very beginning of the nation's history. This economic dominance, we argue, has continued to the present and is manifested in three somewhat different ways: (1) in the *devaluation* of noneconomic institutional functions and roles; (2) in the *accommodation* to economic requirements by other institutions; and (3) in the *penetration* of economic norms into other institutional domains.

Consider the relative devaluation of the distinctive functions of education and of the social roles that fulfill these functions. Education is regarded largely as a means to occupational attainment, which in turn is valued primarily insofar as it promises economic rewards. The acquisition of knowledge and learning for its own sake is not highly valued. Effective performance of the roles involved with education, accordingly, do not confer particularly high status. The "good student" is not looked up to by his or her peers; the "master teacher" receives meager financial rewards and public esteem in comparison with those to be gained by success in business.

Similar processes are observed in the context of the family, although the tendency toward devaluation is perhaps not as pronounced as in other institutional arenas. There is indeed a paradox here because "family values" are typically extolled in public rhetoric. Nevertheless, the lack of appreciation for tasks such as parenting, nurturing, and providing emotional support to others is manifested in actual social relationships. It is the home owner rather than the homemaker who is widely admired and envied—and whose image is reflected in the American Dream. Indeed, perhaps the most telling evidence of the relative devaluation of family functions is the inferior status in our society of those persons most extensively involved in these activities: women.

The relative devaluation of the family in comparison with the economy is not an inevitable consequence of the emergence of a modern, industrial society, whether capitalist or socialist. Adler (1983: 131) points to nations such as Bulgaria, the (then) German Democratic Republic, Japan, Saudi Arabia, and Switzerland to illustrate the possibilities for maintaining a strong commitment to the family despite the profound social changes that accompany the transformation from agriculturally based economies to industrial economies. Each of these countries has made extensive, and sometimes costly, efforts to preserve the vitality of the family. Furthermore, these are precisely the kinds of societies that exhibit low crime rates and are not, in Adler's words, "obsessed with crime."

The distinctive function of the polity, providing for the collective good, also tends to be devalued in comparison with economic functions. The general public has little regard for politics as an intrinsically valuable activity and confers little social honor on the role of the politician. Perhaps as a result, average citizens are not expected to be actively engaged in public service, which is left to the "career" politician. The contrast with economic activity is illuminating. The citizen who refuses to vote may experience mild social disapproval; the "able-bodied" adult who refuses to work is socially degraded. Economic participation is obligatory for most adults. In contrast, even the minimal form of political participation entailed in voting (which has more in common with shopping than with work) is considered discretionary, and useful primarily to the extent that it leads to tangible economic rewards (e.g., lower taxes).

Moreover, the very purpose of government tends to be conceptualized in terms of its capacity to facilitate the individual pursuit of economic prosperity. A good illustration is the advice given to the Democratic ticket in the 1992 presidential campaign by the conservative columnist, George Will. Will chastised liberal Democrats for allegedly becoming preoccupied with issues of rights based on ethnicity and sexuality and advised the Democratic presidential candidates to remember the following point that two popular presidents—Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan—understood very well:

> Americans are happiest when pursuing happiness, happiness understood as material advancement, pursued with government's help but not as a government entitlement. (Will 1992: E5)

Will's advice to liberal Democrats is revealing, not only of the core content of the American Dream and its effect on popular views of government, but of a particular kind of collective "right" to which Americans *are* entitled: the right to consume (cf. Edsall 1992: 7). Both of the major political parties celebrate the right to acquire material possessions; they differ mainly with respect to the proper degree of governmental involvement in expanding access to the means of consumption. No matter which party is in power, the function of government, at least in the domestic sphere, remains subsidiary to individual economic considerations.

Interestingly, one distinctive function of the polity does not appear to be generally devalued, namely, crime control. There is widespread agreement among the American public that government should undertake vigorous efforts to deal with the crime problem. If anything, Americans want government to do more to control crime. Yet, this apparent exception is quite compatible with the claim of economic dominance. Americans' "obsession" with crime is rooted in fears that crime threatens, according to political analyst Thomas Edsall (1992: 9) "their security, their values, their rights, and their livelihoods and the competitive prospects of their children." In other words, because

crime control bears directly on the pursuit of the American Dream, this particular function of the polity receives high priority.

A second way in which the dominance of the economy is manifested is in the *accommodations* that emerge in those situations in which institutional claims are in competition. Economic conditions and requirements typically exert a much stronger influence on the operation of other institutions than vice versa. For example, family routines are dominated by the schedules, rewards, and penalties of the labor market. Consider the resistance of employers (and their representatives in government) to proposals for maternity leaves, flexible hours, or on-the-job child care. The contrast between the United States and another capitalist society with very low crime rates—Japan—is striking in this regard. In Japan, business enterprises are accommodated to the needs of the family, becoming in some respects a "surrogate family," with services ranging from child rearing to burial (Adler 1983: 132).

The most important way that family life is influenced by the economy, however, is through the necessity for paid employment to support a family. Joblessness makes it difficult for families to remain intact and to form in the first place. In the urban underclass, where rates of joblessness are chronically high, so too are rates of separation, divorce, single-parent households, and births to unmarried women (Wilson 1987).

Educational institutions are also more likely to accommodate to the demands of the economy than is the economy to respond to the requirements of education. The timing of schooling reflects occupational demands rather than intrinsic features of the learning process or personal interest in the pursuit of knowledge. People go to school largely to prepare for "good" jobs, and once in the labor market, there is little opportunity to pursue further education for its own sake. When workers do return to school, it is almost always to upgrade skills or credentials to keep pace with job demands, to seek higher paying jobs, or to "retool" during spells of unemployment. At the organizational level, schools are dependent on the economy for financial resources, and thus it becomes important for school officials to convince business leaders that education is suitably responsive to business needs.

The polity likewise is dependent on the economy for financial support. Governments must accordingly take care to cultivate and maintain an environment hospitable to investment. If they do not, they run the risk of being literally "downgraded" by financial markets, as happened to Detroit in 1992 when Moody's Investors Service dropped the city's credit rating to non-investment grade. Cities have little choice but to accommodate to market demands in such situations. "A city proposes, Moody's disposes. There is no appeals court or court of last ratings resort" (*New York Times*, 1992: C1). The pursuit of the collective good is thus circumscribed by economic imperatives.

A final way in which the dominance of the economy in the institutional balance of power is manifested is in the *penetration* of economic norms into other institutional areas. Schools rely on grading as a system of extrinsic rewards, like wages, to insure compliance with goals. Learning takes place within the context of individualized competition for these external rewards, and teaching inevitably tends to become oriented toward testing. Economic terminology permeates the very language of education, as in the recent emphasis in higher education on "accountability" conceptualized in terms of the "value-added" to students in the educational production process.

Within the polity, a "bottom-line" mentality develops. Effective politicians are those who deliver the goods. Moreover, the notion that the government would work better if it were run more like a business continues to be an article of faith among large segments of the American public.

The family has probably been most resistant to the intrusion of economic norms. Yet even here, pressures toward penetration are apparent. Contributions to family life tend to be measured against the all-important "breadwinner" role, which has been extended to include women who work in the paid labor force. No corresponding movement of men into the role of "homemaker" has occurred, and a declining number of women desire or can afford to occupy

this role on a full-time basis. Here again, shifts in popular terminology are instructive. Husbands and wives are "partners" who "manage" the household "division of labor." We can detect no comparable shifts in kin-based terminology, or primary group norms, from the family to the workplace.

In sum, the social organization of the United States is characterized by a striking dominance of the economy in the institutional balance of power. As a result of this economic dominance, the inherent tendencies of a capitalist economy to orient the members of society toward an unrestrained pursuit of economic achievements are developed to an extreme degree. These tendencies are expressed at the cultural level in the preeminence of monetary success as the overriding goal—the American Dream—and in the relative deemphasis placed on the importance of using normative means to reach this goal—anomie. The anomic nature of the American Dream and the institutional structure of American society are thus mutually supportive and reinforcing. The key remaining question is the impact of this type of social organization on crime.

Anomie, Weak Social Controls, and Crime

The American Dream contributes to high levels of crime in two important ways, one direct and the other indirect. It has a direct effect on crime through the creation of an anomic normative order, that is, an environment in which social norms are unable to exert a strong regulatory force on the members of society. It has an indirect effect on crime by contributing to an institutional balance of power that inhibits the development of strong mechanisms of external social control. The criminogenic tendencies of the American Dream are thus due in part to the distinctive content of the cultural values and beliefs that comprise it and in part to the institutional consequences of these values and beliefs.

One criminogenic aspect of the specific content of the American Dream is the expression of the primary success goal in monetary terms. Because monetary success is inherently open-ended and elusive, the adequacy of the legitimate means for achieving this particular cultural goal is necessarily suspect. No matter how much money someone is able to make by staying within legal boundaries, illegal means will always offer further advantages in pursuit of the ultimate goal. There is thus a perpetual attractiveness associated with illegal activity that is an inevitable corollary of the goal of monetary success.

This culturally induced pressure to "innovate" by using illegitimate means is exacerbated by the dominance of the economy in the institutional balance of power. There are, of course, important noneconomic tasks carried out in other institutional arenas, tasks associated with goals that might in fact be readily attainable within the confines of the legal order. However, as we have suggested, roles effectively performed in the capacity of being a parent or spouse, a student or scholar, an engaged citizen or public servant are simply not the primary bases upon which success and failure are defined in American society. The dominance of the economy continuously erodes the structural supports for functional alternatives to the goal of economic success.

Nor does the ethos of the American Dream contain within it strong counterbalancing injunctions against substituting more effective illegitimate means for less effective legitimate means. To the contrary, the distinctive cultural "value" accompanying the monetary success goal in the American Dream is the *devaluation* of all but the most technically efficient means.

The American Dream does not completely subsume culture. There are other elements of culture that define socially acceptable modes of behavior and that affirm the legitimacy of social norms, including legal norms. In principle, these other cultural elements could counterbalance the anomic pressures that emanate from the American Dream. However, the very same institutional dynamics that contribute to the pressures to innovate in the pursuit of

economic goals also make it less likely that the anomic pressures inherent in the American Dream will in fact be counterbalanced by other social forces.

As noneconomic institutions are relatively devalued, are forced to accommodate to economic needs, and are penetrated by economic standards, they are less able to fulfill their distinctive functions effectively. These functions include socialization into acceptance of the social norms. Weak families and poor schools are handicapped in their efforts to promote allegiance to social rules, including legal prohibitions. As a result, the pressures to disregard normative constraints in the pursuit of the goal of monetary success also tend to undermine social norms more generally. In the absence of the cultivation of strong commitments to social norms, the selection of the means for realizing goals *of any type* is guided mainly by instrumental considerations.

In addition, the relative impotence of noneconomic institutions is manifested in a reduced capacity to exert external social control. The government is constrained in its capacity to provide public goods that would make crime less attractive and in its efforts to mobilize collective resources—including moral resources—to effectively deter criminal choices. Single-parent families or those in which both parents have fulltime jobs, all else equal, are less able to provide extensive supervision over children. All families must rely to some extent on other institutions, usually the schools, for assistance in social control. Yet poorly funded or crowded schools also find it difficult to exert effective supervision, especially when students see little or no connection between what is taught in the classroom and what is valued outside of it.

Finally, weak institutions invite challenge. Under conditions of extreme competitive individualism, people actively resist institutional control. They not only fall from the insecure grasp of powerless institutions, sometimes they deliberately, even proudly, push themselves away. The problem of "external" social control, then, is inseparable from the problem of the "internal" regulatory force of social norms, or anomie. Anomic societies will inevitably find it difficult and costly to exert social control over the behavior of people who feel free to use whatever means that prove most effective in reaching personal goals. Hence the very sociocultural dynamics that make American institutions weak also enable and entitle Americans to defy institutional controls. If Americans are exceptionally resistant to social control—and therefore exceptionally vulnerable to criminal temptations—it is because they live in a society that enshrines the unfettered pursuit of individual material success above all other values. In the United States, anomie is a virtue.

Conclusion

This reformulation of Merton's classic theory of social structure and anomie is intended to challenge criminologists and policymakers alike to think about crime in America as a macro-level product of widely admired cultural and social structures with deep historical roots. Criminological theories that neglect the ironic interdependence between crime and the normal functioning of the American social system will be unable to explain the preoccupation with crime that so dramatically separates the United States from other developed societies. Significant reductions in crime will not result from reforms limited to the criminal justice system, which is itself shaped in important ways by the same cultural and social forces—the same desperate emphasis on ends over means—that produce high rates of crime. Nor will social reforms, whatever their other merits, that widen access to legitimate opportunities for persons "locked out" of the American Dream bring relief from the crimes of those who are "locked in" the American Dream, exposed to its limitless imperatives in the absence of moderating social forces. Reducing these crimes will require fundamental social transformations that few Americans desire, and a rethinking of a dream that is the envy of the world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the core features of the American Dream? Do you agree with Rosenfeld and Messner's characterization of the American Dream?
2. Describe *how* the dominance of the economy interferes with the effective functioning of other institutions (family, school, polity) in the United States.
3. What policy recommendations would Rosenfeld and Messner make for controlling crime? Would they recommend increasing the opportunities for monetary success, as do many strain theorists?
4. Rosenfeld and Messner argue that the American Dream and the dominance of the economy promote crime by reducing social control (see Part V). Do you think that the American Dream and the dominance of the economy also promote the types of strain described by Merton and Agnew?

14.
Pressured Into Crime: General Strain Theory*

Robert Agnew

According to Merton (1938) and most subsequent strain theorists, crime results from the inability to achieve monetary success or other positively valued goals through legitimate channels. This goal blockage creates strain or frustration in the individual, which increases the likelihood of a criminal response. Whether individuals respond to strain with crime is said to depend on several factors, such as the level of social control and whether the individual associates with criminal others. Evidence for this version of strain theory is mixed and, partly as a consequence, strain theory no longer occupies the dominant position that it once did (see Agnew, 2000; Akers and Sellers, 2008; Burton and Cullen, 1992).

Agnew presents a much broader version of strain theory in the following selection—which is adapted from his book Pressured Into Crime: An Overview of General Strain Theory *(2006b). In the first part of the selection, Agnew defines "strains" and notes that the failure to achieve positively valued goals is only one of several types of strain. Strains also involve the loss of valued possessions and negative or aversive treatment by others. He goes on to distinguish between objective and subjective strains, as well as experienced, vicarious, and anticipated strains. He then describes the characteristics of those strains most likely to result in crime—a critical task since the research suggests that some strains lead to crime while others do not. The second part of the selection examines the reasons why certain strains increase the likelihood of crime. As Agnew states, strains lead to crime primarily because they increase negative emotions, such as anger and frustration, which create pressure for corrective action. But strains contribute to crime for other reasons as well. The final section describes why some people are more likely than others to cope with strains through crime.*

The research on Agnew's strain theory is generally promising (for summaries, see Agnew, 2001, 2006a, b, 2012, 2015; Brezina, 2017). Studies suggest that most of the strains he lists increase the likelihood of crime, with certain of these strains being among the most important causes of crime. These strains increase crime partly through their effect on negative emotions like anger. And individuals are more likely to respond to these strains with crime when they possess several of the factors said to increase the likelihood of criminal coping, such as low self-control, beliefs favorable to crime, and association with delinquent peers.

References

Agnew, Robert. 2000. "Sources of Criminality: Strain and Subcultural Theories." In Joseph F. Sheley (ed.), *Criminology: A Contemporary Handbook*, 3rd edition, pp. 349–371. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

____. 2001. "Building on the Foundation of General Strain Theory: Specifying the Types of Strain Most Likely to Lead to Crime and Delinquency." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **38**: 319–361.

____. 2006a. "General Strain Theory: Current Status and Directions for Further Research." In Francis T. Cullen, John Paul Wright, and Kristie R. Blevins (eds.), *Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **15**, pp. 101–123. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

____. 2006b. *Pressured Into Crime: An Overview of General Strain Theory*. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

____. 2012. “General Strain Theory.” In Marvin D. Krohn, Alan J. Lizotte, and Gina Penly Hall (eds.), *Handbook on Crime and Delinquency*, pp. 169–185. New York: Springer.

____. 2015. “General Strain Theory and Delinquency.” In Marvin D. Krohn and Jodi Lane (eds.), *The Handbook of Juvenile Delinquency and Juvenile Justice*, pp. 239–256. New York: Wiley Blackwell.

Akers, Ronald L. and Christine S. Sellers. 2008. *Criminological Theories: Introduction and Evaluation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Brezina, Timothy. 2017. “General Strain Theory.” In Henry N. Pontell (ed.), *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Burton, Velmer S., Jr. and Francis T. Cullen. 1992. “The Empirical Status of Strain Theory.” *Journal of Crime and Justice* **15**(2): 1–30.

Merton, Robert K. 1938. “Social Structure and Anomie.” *American Sociological Review* **3**: 672–673.

According to general strain theory (GST), people engage in crime because they experience strains or stressors. For example, they are in desperate need of money or they believe they are being mistreated by their family members. They become upset, experiencing a range of negative emotions, including anger, frustration, and depression. And they may cope with their strains and negative emotions through crime. Crime is a way to reduce or escape from strains. For example, individuals engage in theft to obtain the money they desperately need or they run away from home to escape their abusive parents. Crime is a way for individuals to seek revenge against those who have wronged them. For example, individuals assault those who have mistreated them. And crime is a way to alleviate the negative emotions that result from strains. For example, individuals use illegal drugs to make themselves feel better.

Not all individuals, however, respond to strains with crime. If someone steps on your foot, for example, you are probably unlikely to respond by punching the person. Some people are more likely than others to cope with strains through crime. Criminal coping is more likely when people lack the ability to cope in a legal manner. For example, crime is more likely when people do not have the verbal skills to negotiate with those who mistreat them or do not have others they can turn to for help. Criminal coping is more likely when the costs of crime are low. For example, crime is more likely when people are in environments where the likelihood of being sanctioned for crime is low. And criminal coping is more likely when people are disposed to crime. For example, assault is more likely when people believe that violence is an appropriate response to being treated in a disrespectful manner.

I briefly elaborate on these arguments below. First, I define strains and describe the types of strains most likely to lead to crime. Next, I discuss why strains increase the likelihood of crime. Finally, I examine why some people are more likely than others to respond to strains with crime….

---

* Adapted with permission from *Pressured Into Crime: An Overview of General Strain*, copyright © 2006 by Roxbury Publishing Company.

What Are Strains?

Strains refer to events or conditions that are disliked by the individual. There are three major types of strains. Individuals may lose something they value (lose something good). Perhaps their money or property is stolen, a close friend or family member dies, or a romantic partner breaks up with them. Individuals may be treated in an aversive or negative manner by others (receive something bad). Perhaps they are sexually or physically abused by a family member, their peers insult or ridicule them, or their employer treats them in a disrespectful manner. And individuals may be unable to achieve their goals (fail to get something they want). Perhaps they have less money, status, or autonomy than they want....

Objective and Subjective Strains

Some events and conditions are disliked by most people or at least by most people in a given group. For example, most people dislike being physically assaulted or deprived of adequate food and shelter. And it has been argued that most males dislike having their masculine status called into question (Messerschmidt 1993). I refer to these events and conditions as objective strains, because they are generally disliked. It is possible to determine the *objective strains* for a group by interviewing a carefully selected sample of group members or people familiar with the group being examined. We can ask these people how much they (or the group members) would dislike a range of events and conditions (see Turner and Wheaton 1995).

It is important to keep in mind, however, that people sometimes differ in their subjective evaluation of the same events and conditions—even those events and conditions classified as objective strains. So a given objective strain, like a death in the family, may be strongly disliked by one person but only mildly disliked by another. This is because the subjective evaluation of objective strains is influenced by a range of factors, including peoples' personality traits, goals and values, and prior experiences. Wheaton (1990), for example, found that there was some variation in how people evaluated their divorce. Among other things, the quality of their prior marriage strongly influenced their evaluation, with people in bad marriages evaluating their divorce in positive terms. I therefore make a distinction between objective and *subjective strains*. While an objective strain refers to an event or condition that is disliked by most people or most people in a given group, a subjective strain refers to an event or condition that is disliked by the particular person or persons being examined (see Agnew 2001). As just suggested, there is only partial overlap between objective and subjective strains.

Most of the research on strain theory focuses on objective strains. Researchers ask respondents whether they have experienced events and conditions that are assumed to be disliked. For example, they ask respondents whether they have received failing grades at school. No attempt is made to measure the respondents' subjective evaluation of these events and conditions (although see Agnew and White 1992; Sharp et al. 2001). This may cause researchers to underestimate the effect of strains on crime, because objective strains are not always disliked by the individuals being examined. Some people, for example, may not be particularly bothered by the fact that they have received failing grades. It is therefore desirable for criminologists to measure both the individual's exposure to objective strains and the individual's *subjective evaluation* of these strains (e.g., ask individuals whether they have received failing grades *and*, if so, how much they dislike such grades).

Experienced, Vicarious, and Anticipated Strains

GST focuses on the individual's personal experiences with strains; that is, did the individual personally experience disliked events or conditions. For example, was the individual physically assaulted. Personal experiences with strains should bear the strongest relationship to crime. However, it is sometimes important to consider the individual's vicarious and anticipated experiences with strains as well (see Agnew 2002; Eitle and Turner 2003).

Vicarious strains refer to the strains experienced by others around the individual, especially close others like family members and friends. For example, were any of the individual's family members or friends physically assaulted. Vicarious strains can also upset the individual and lead to criminal coping. Agnew (2002), for example, found that individuals were more likely to engage in crime if they reported that their family members and friends had been the victims of serious assaults (also see Eitle and Turner 2002; Maxwell 2001; Mullins et al. 2004). This held true even after Agnew took account of other factors, like the individual's own victimization experiences and prior criminal history. Vicarious strains may have increased the likelihood of crime for several reasons. For example, perhaps individuals were seeking revenge against those who had victimized their family and friends. Or perhaps individuals were seeking to prevent the perpetrators from causing further harm. Vicarious strains are most likely to cause crime when they are serious, involve someone that the individual cares about and has assumed responsibility for protecting, involve unjust treatment, and pose a threat to others (see Agnew 2002 for a fuller discussion).

It is also sometimes important to consider anticipated experiences with strains. *Anticipated strains* refer to the individual's expectation that his or her current strains will continue into the future or that new strains will be experienced. For example, individuals may anticipate that they will be the victims of physical assault. Like vicarious strains, anticipated strains may upset individuals and lead to criminal coping. Individuals may engage in crime to prevent anticipated strains from occurring, to seek revenge against those who might inflict such strains, or to alleviate negative emotions. To illustrate, many adolescents, particularly in high-crime communities, anticipate that they will be the victims of violence. They often (illegally) carry weapons as a result and they may even engage in violence against others in an effort to reduce the likelihood that they will be victimized. In this area, Anderson (1999) argues that the young men in very poor, high-crime communities often try to reduce the likelihood they will be victimized by adopting a tough demeanor and responding to even minor shows of disrespect with violence. Anticipated strains are most likely to result in crime when individuals believe that they have a high probability of occurring in the near future, they will be serious in nature, and they will involve unjust treatment by others (see Agnew 2002)....

What Are the Characteristics of Those Types of Strains Most Likely to Cause Crime?

Not all strains result in crime. In fact, the experience of some strains may reduce the likelihood of crime. This is the case, for example, with parental discipline that is consistent and fair. Juveniles may not like such discipline, but much data suggest that it reduces the likelihood of crime (Agnew 2005). Strains are most likely to cause crime when they: 1) are seen as high in magnitude, 2) are seen as unjust, 3) are associated with low social control, and 4) create some pressure or incentive to engage in criminal coping. Strains with these characteristics are more likely to elicit strong negative emotions, reduce the ability to engage in legal coping, reduce the perceived costs of crime, and create a disposition for crime.

The Strain Is Seen as High in Magnitude

Imagine that you are chatting with a group of acquaintances and someone reacts to a remark you make by stating "you don't know what you're talking about." Now imagine the same situation, but this time someone reacts to your remark by stating "you're an asshole" and then shoving you. Both reactions are likely to upset you, but I think most people would agree that the second reaction is more likely to lead to crime. Part of the reason for this is that the second reaction is more severe than the first. Generally speaking, strains that are seen as more severe or higher in magnitude are more likely to result in crime. The severity of the strain refers to the extent to which the strain is negatively evaluated; that is, the extent to which it is disliked and viewed as having a negative impact on one's life. Among other things, severe strains are more likely to elicit strong negative emotions, which create pressure for corrective action, and they are more difficult to cope with in a legal manner (e.g., it is more difficult to legally cope with a large rather than a small need for money).

A strain is more likely to be seen as severe if: a) it is high in degree or size (e.g., a large versus a small financial loss); b) it is frequent, recent, of long duration, and expected to continue in the future; and c) it threatens the *core* goals, needs, values, activities, and/or identities of the individual (e.g., does the strain threaten a core identity, perhaps one's masculine identity, or a secondary identity, perhaps one's identity as a good chess player).

The Strain Is Seen as Unjust

Imagine you are walking down the street. Someone accidentally trips on a crack in the sidewalk, bumps into you, and knocks you to the ground. Now imagine that you are walking down the street and someone deliberately shoves you aside, knocking you to the ground. Both incidents qualify as strains; being knocked to the ground is disliked by most people. But I think most people would agree that the second incident is more likely to result in crime. Even though both incidents involve the same amount of physical harm, the behavior in the second incident is more likely to be seen as unjust. Unjust strains are more likely to lead to crime for several reasons; most notably the fact that they make individuals more angry.

A strain is more likely to be seen as unjust when it involves the voluntary and intentional violation of a relevant justice norm or rule. Most strains involve a perpetrator who does something to a victim. We are more likely to view the perpetrator's behavior as unjust if the perpetrator freely chose to treat the victim in a way that he or she knew

would probably be disliked (the "voluntary and intentional" part). We are less likely to view the behavior as unjust if it is the result of such things as reasonable accident or chance. That is why we are less upset by an accidental bump than by a deliberate shove, even though both may cause the same physical harm. We are also less likely to view strains as unjust if they are the result of our own behavior (e.g., we injure ourselves while behaving in a reckless manner) or natural forces (e.g., our home suffers damage during a storm).

Unjust behavior, however, involves more than a voluntary and intentional effort to harm someone. For example, parents voluntarily and intentionally punish their children on a regular basis, but we usually do not view their behavior as unjust. In order for voluntary and intentional behaviors to be seen as unjust, they must also violate a relevant justice rule. In particular, researchers have discovered that most people employ certain rules to determine whether a particular behavior is just or unjust (see Agnew 2001, for a fuller discussion). For example, the voluntary and intentional infliction of strain is more likely to be seen as unjust when victims believe that the strain they have experienced is undeserved and not in the service of some greater good (e.g., God or country).

The Strain Is Associated with Low Social Control

Consider the following two strains. First, someone is unemployed for a long period of time. Second, a well-paid lawyer has to work long hours on a regular basis, often performing difficult and complex tasks. I think most people would agree that the first strain is more likely to result in crime. This example highlights a third factor affecting the likelihood that strains will lead to crime. Strains are more likely to lead to crime when they are associated with low social control.

There are several types of social control, with each referring to a factor or set of factors that restrains the individual from crime. There is *direct control*, which refers to the extent to which others set rules that prohibit crime, monitor the individual's behavior, and consistently sanction the individual for rule violations. There is the individual's *emotional bond or attachment to conventional others*, such as family members and teachers. There is the *individual's investment in conventional institutions*, such as school and work. It is easier to engage in crime when emotional bonds and investments are weak, since there is less to lose through crime. And there is the individual's *beliefs regarding crime*. It is easier to engage in crime when one does not believe that it is wrong to do so.

Certain strains are associated with low levels of social control. For example, this is the case with parental rejection. Children who are rejected by their parents probably have little emotional bond to them and are probably subject to little direct control by them. To give another example, those strains involving unemployment and work in the secondary labor market ("bad jobs") are associated with a low investment in conventional institutions. Strains associated with low social control are more likely to result in crime because they reduce the costs of crime, among other things.

The Strain Creates Some Pressure or Incentive for Criminal Coping

A final factor affecting the likelihood that a strain will lead to crime is the extent to which the strain creates some incentive or pressure to engage in criminal coping. Certain strains are more easily resolved through crime and/or less easily resolved through legal channels than other strains (see Brezina 2000). As a consequence, individuals have more incentive to cope with these strains through crime. For example, that type of strain involving a desperate need for money is more easily resolved through crime than is that type involving the inability to achieve educational success. It is much easier to get money through crime than it is to get educational success. Also, certain strains are

associated with exposure to others who model crime, reinforce crime, teach beliefs favorable to crime, or otherwise try to pressure or entice the individual into crime. For example, individuals who experience child abuse are exposed to criminal models—who may foster the belief that crime is an appropriate way to deal with one's problems. To give another example, many interpersonal disputes occur before an audience, with the audience members often urging or pressuring the disputants to engage in violence....

What Specific Strains Are Most Likely to Cause Crime?

Drawing on the above discussion, it is predicted that the following specific strains are most likely to cause crime:

- Parental rejection.
- Supervision/discipline that is erratic, excessive, and/or harsh.
- Child abuse and neglect.
- Negative secondary school experiences (e.g., low grades, negative relations with teachers, the experience of school as boring and a waste of time).
- Abusive peer relations (e.g., insults, threats, physical assaults).
- Work in the secondary labor market (i.e., "bad jobs" that pay little, have few benefits, little opportunity for advancement, and unpleasant working conditions).
- Chronic unemployment.
- Marital problems.
- The failure to achieve selected goals, including thrills/excitement, high levels of autonomy, masculine status, and the desire for much money in a short period of time.
- Criminal victimization.
- Residence in economically deprived communities.
- Homelessness.
- Discrimination based on characteristics such as race/ethnicity and gender.

Data support these predictions, although the effect of certain of these strains—such as abusive peer relations and discrimination—has not been well examined (see Agnew 2006).

It should also be noted that crime is especially likely when individuals experience two or more strains close together in time. Experiencing several strains at once is especially likely to generate negative emotions and tax the individual's ability to cope in a legal manner. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for strains to occur together. One strain, such as a job loss, frequently leads to other strains—such as family conflict (see De Coster and Kort-Butler 2004; Pearlin 1989; Wethington 2000). As a consequence, researchers who test GST should employ cumulative measures, which count the number of different strains conducive to crime that are experienced....

Why Do Strains Increase the Likelihood of Crime?

Strains lead individuals to commit crimes for several reasons, the most important of which involves the effect of strains on negative emotions.

Strains Lead to Negative Emotions

Strains increase the likelihood that individuals will experience a range of negative emotions, including anger, frustration, jealousy, depression, and fear. These negative emotions increase the likelihood of crime for several reasons. Most notably, they create pressure for corrective action. Individuals feel bad and want to do something about it. As indicated above, crime is one possible response. Crime may be used to reduce or escape from strains, obtain revenge, and alleviate negative emotions (through illegal drug use). Negative emotions may also reduce the ability to cope in a legal manner, reduce the perceived costs of crime, and create a disposition for crime. For example, angry individuals have more trouble reasoning with others, are less aware of and concerned about the costs of crime, and have a desire for revenge. Most research on GST has focused on the emotion of anger, and studies suggest that anger partly explains the effect of strains on crime—particularly violent crime (Agnew 2006). Other emotions may be more relevant to other types of crime. For example, frustration may be most relevant to the explanation of property crime, while depression may help explain drug use.

Strains Lead to the Personality Traits of Negative Emotionality and Low Constraint

Individuals who possess the trait of negative emotionality are easily upset, experience intense emotions when upset, and have an aggressive interactional style. Those possessing the trait of low constraint tend to act without thinking, engage in risky behaviors, reject social norms, and show little concern for others. Not surprisingly, these traits increase the likelihood of crime.

Some studies suggest that strains may also increase crime through their effect on these traits (Agnew 2006; Agnew et al. 2002). In particular, chronic or repeated strains may reduce the ability of individuals to cope in a legal manner. As a consequence, new strains are more likely to be experienced as overwhelming and elicit strong emotional reactions. You may have experienced this phenomena yourself. When things are going well in your life, it is often easy to cope with the occasional strain. But when things are going poorly (you are experiencing a lot of strains), even a minor strain may overwhelm and upset you. Also, certain strains, like harsh and erratic parental discipline, may contribute to low constraint. Parents who employ harsh, erratic disciplinary techniques fail to teach their children to exercise self restraint. In fact, they model low constraint. Children only learn to restrain themselves when they are consistently sanctioned for their misbehavior in an appropriate manner. Limited data provide support for these arguments (Agnew 2006; Agnew et al. 2002; Anderson 1999; Bernard 1990; Colvin 2000).

Strains May Reduce Levels of Social Control

Strains may also lead to reductions in the major types of social control. This argument has been made by most of the leading strain theorists. Many strains involve negative treatment by conventional others, like parents, spouses, teachers, and employers. Further, these strains are often chronic or occur on a repeated basis. Such strains include child abuse, harsh discipline by parents, demeaning treatment by teachers, the receipt of low grades, conflict with spouses, unemployment, and work in "bad" jobs. These strains may reduce one's emotional bond to conventional others. Child abuse, for example, is likely to reduce the child's bond to parents. These strains may also reduce one's investment in conventional activities. Chronic unemployment, for example, represents a major reduction in one's investment in conventional activities. Further, these strains may reduce levels of direct control by causing individuals to retreat from conventional others, like parents and teachers. And these effects may reduce the individual's belief that crime is wrong, since the individual's ties to those who teach this belief are weakened. Also, individuals are less likely to accept societal norms condemning crime when they fail to reap the benefits that society has to offer, like a good education, a good job, and a loving family. Individuals who are very poor, for example, are less likely to condemn criminal methods for obtaining money. Data provide some support for these arguments (e.g., Agnew 2006; Elliott et al. 1985; Paternoster and Mazerolle 1994).

Strains May Foster the Social Learning of Crime

Finally, strains may foster the social learning of crime. Most notably, strains increase the likelihood that individuals will join or form criminal groups, like delinquent peer groups and gangs. The members of such groups, in turn, model crime, reinforce crime, and teach beliefs favorable to crime. As just indicated, strains often reduce levels of social control, which increases the likelihood that individuals will come in contact with criminal groups and frees individuals to associate with such groups. Strains also increase the appeal of criminal groups. In particular, the victims of strains often view criminal groups as a solution to their strains. For example, individuals who cannot achieve status through conventional channels, like educational and occupational success, often join criminal gangs because the gang makes them feel important, respected, and/or feared (see especially Cohen 1955). Further, strains directly increase the likelihood that individuals will come to view crime as a desirable, justifiable, or at least excusable form of behavior. For example, many strains involve unjust treatment by others. Such treatment may foster the belief that crime is justified since it is being used to "right" an injustice. Studies also provide some support for these arguments (Agnew 2006; Paternoster and Mazerolle 1994).

Why Are Some People More Likely Than Others to Cope with Strains Through Crime?

Not all people cope with strains through crime. Most people, in fact, cope in a legal manner. For example, they negotiate with the people who irritate or harass them, they file complaints against the people who wrong them, or they alleviate their negative emotions by exercising or listening to music. A number of factors influence how individuals cope with the strains and negative emotions they experience. Criminal coping is most likely when:

Individuals Lack the Ability to Cope with Strains in a Legal Manner

Some individuals are less able to cope with strains in a legal manner than others. Their ability to cope in a legal manner is partly a function of their individual traits, like their intelligence, social and problem-solving skills, and personality traits. It is partly a function of the resources they possess, including their financial resources. And it is partly a function of their level of conventional social support. Are there conventional others, such as parents and friends, that they can turn to for aid and comfort?

The Costs of Criminal Coping Are Low

Many individuals avoid criminal coping because the costs of crime are high for them. There is a good chance that they will be sanctioned by others if they engage in crime. They also have a lot to lose if they engage in crime; they might get expelled from school, lose their job, or jeopardize their relationship with people they care about. Further, engaging in crime will make them feel guilty because they believe that crime is wrong. But for other individuals, the costs of criminal coping are low. They are in environments where the likelihood of sanction for crime is small. Perhaps they are poorly supervised by their parents, their friends do not care if they engage in crime, and neighborhood residents seldom report crimes to the police. They do not have jobs to lose or close relationships with others that might be jeopardized by crime. And they do not believe that crime is wrong. Such individuals, then, are more likely to cope with strains through crime.

Individuals Are Disposed to Crime

Some individuals are more disposed than others to respond to strains with crime. They may possess personality traits which increase their inclination to crime, such as the traits of negative emotionality and low constraint. Also, some individuals may believe that crime is an appropriate response to certain strains, like disrespectful treatment by others. Further, some individuals may associate with criminal others, who model and reinforce crime. This too increases their disposition to respond to strains with crime.

Studies provide mixed support for these arguments. Some studies find that certain of the above factors increase the likelihood that individuals will respond to strains with crime, while other studies do not. Agnew (2006) discusses some possible reasons for these mixed findings....

Conclusion

Why do individuals engage in crime according to GST? They experience strains, become upset as a result, and may cope with their strains and negative emotions through crime. Criminal coping is especially likely if they lack the ability to cope in a legal manner, their costs of crime are low, and they are disposed to crime. Crime may allow them to reduce or escape from their strains, obtain revenge, or alleviate their negative emotions (through illegal drug use).

While GST focuses on the explanation of individual differences in offending, it can also shed light on patterns of offending over the life course, group differences in crime, and community and societal differences in crime. Such patterns and differences can be partly explained in terms of differences in the exposure to strains conducive to crime and in the possession of those factors that influence the likelihood of criminal coping. For example, gender differences in crime are partly due to the fact that males are more often exposed to strains conducive to crime and are more likely to cope with strains through crime (Broidy and Agnew 1997).

GST also provides recommendations for reducing crime. Crime can be reduced by reducing individuals' exposure to strains conducive to crime and their likelihood of responding to strains with crime. Strategies for reducing the exposure to strains include a) eliminating strains conducive to crime, b) altering strains so as to make them less conducive to crime (e.g., reducing their magnitude or perceived injustice), c) removing individuals from strains conducive to crime, d) equipping individuals with the traits and skills to avoid strains conducive to crime, and e) altering the perceptions and goals of individuals to reduce subjective strains. Strategies for reducing the likelihood that individuals will respond to strains with crime include a) improving conventional coping skills and resources, b) increasing social support, c) reducing association with delinquent peers and beliefs favorable to crime.

GST presents a rather different explanation of crime than that offered by the other leading crime theories. GST is the only theory to focus explicitly on *negative relationships with others:* relationships in which others take the individual's valued possessions, treat the individual in an aversive manner, or prevent the individual from achieving his or her goals. Further, GST is the only theory to argue that individuals are *pressured into crime* by these negative relationships and the emotions that result from them. At the same time, GST is intimately related to the other leading theories of crime. As argued earlier, strains may contribute to personality traits conducive to crime, reduce social control, and foster the social learning of crime. Further, the factors associated with all of these theories interact with one another in their effect on crime. In particular, the effect of strains on crime is influenced or conditioned by personality traits, level of social control, and those factors that foster the social learning of crime—like association with criminal peers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Give examples of the types of questions you might ask to measure the three major types of strain listed by Agnew.
2. List three strains that are relatively likely to cause crime and three strains with a low relative likelihood of causing crime. Justify your selection of strains.
3. *Why* do strained individuals sometimes turn to crime?
4. Drawing on Agnew, describe the type of person who would be *most likely* to respond to strain with crime.
5. What policy recommendations might Agnew make for controlling crime?
6. Describe the ways in which general strain theory is related to control and social learning theories, including the ways in which variables from these theories work together to cause crime.

PART V

VARIETIES OF CONTROL THEORY

Francis T. Cullen
University of Cincinnati

Robert Agnew
Emory University

Pamela Wilcox
Pennsylvania State University

Sociological explanations of crime have been dominated by three main traditions: differential association/learning theory, anomie/strain theory, and control theory. Other theories have been set forth, but usually they have either integrated concepts from, or have been developed explicitly to challenge, these three dominant traditions. The enduring appeal of these traditions is in part due to the elegant way in which original statements of the theories conveyed powerful theses as to the origins of criminal conduct. Indeed, each perspective was authored by a scholar of enormous accomplishment: anomie/strain theory by Robert K. Merton; differential association theory by Edwin Sutherland; and control theory by Travis Hirschi.

Hirschi was not the first control theorist. As noted previously, Shaw and McKay (Chapter 3) tied delinquency to the attenuation of control in inner-city areas. Other theorists focused on how types of control—usually differentiating between those inside individuals (e.g., conscience) and those outside individuals (e.g., parental reactions)—were related to wayward behavior. For example, Reiss (1951) delineated "personal and social controls," and Nye (1958) emphasized controls that were "internal," "direct," and "indirect." Sykes and Matza (Chapter 15 in this part) also are seen as control theorists, because they examined how people become free to commit crime only when beliefs can be evoked to "neutralize" the restraint normative standards usually exert over them. Furthermore, Walter Reckless (1961) advanced the "containment theory" perspective that anticipated many of the ideas that Hirschi would later formalize (for an overview of control theory, see Britt and Costello, 2015).

Despite these predecessors, it was Hirschi's "social bond theory," published in *Causes of Delinquency* (1969), that emerged as the preeminent statement of control theory (Chapter 16 in this part; see Costello and Laub, 2020). In this work, Hirschi divided criminological theory into three main perspectives, which he identified by the terms "control theory," "strain theory," and "cultural deviance theory"—a term he used for differential association/learning approaches (see also Kornhauser, 1978). He argued that these three perspectives were incompatible, and that they should be seen as rivals to be tested empirically against one another. Thus, in *Causes of Delinquency*, Hirschi not only set forth his social bond theory but also presented data showing the merits of his perspective and the comparative weaknesses of strain and cultural deviance perspectives.

Up until this time, most theoretical statements were just that—essays proposing a plausible explanation of crime. Hirschi, however, "upped the ante" by showing that theories could be tested and by claiming that empirical evidence

should be the arbiter of which perspective deserved allegiance. In particular, Hirschi revealed the utility of using survey research to test theories. In this method, respondents—usually juveniles in a high school—would be given a questionnaire that contained *both* measures of theoretical concepts and a "self-report" scale of delinquency. In this way, it would be possible to see which theory, as operationalized by the measures on the questionnaire, could explain more or less involvement in delinquency. It is noteworthy that this approach is the chief way in which criminologists test micro-level theories of crime.

We will turn shortly to Hirschi's social bond theory. As a prelude, however, we will focus on perhaps his two most important theoretical predecessors: first, techniques of neutralization theory by Gresham M. Sykes and David Matza (1957 [Chapter 15 in this part]) and, second, containment theory by Walter C. Reckless (1961).

Techniques of Neutralization

Sykes and Matza's delinquency theory represents both the embrace of and departure from Sutherland's differential association perspective (see Chapter 7 in Part III). Sutherland had proposed that individuals enter crime because they learn definitions favorable to violation of the law. He was largely silent, however, on the content of these definitions. Building on Sutherland, Sykes and Matza provide insight on what specific definitions or beliefs might encourage offending. They delineate a core set of beliefs—which they label "techniques of neutralization"—that they argue are learned and permit law-breaking to take place. Unlike Sutherland, however, they do not see most offenders as becoming so enmeshed in a criminal value system as to reject the norms of the larger conventional society. Thus, they criticize in particular subcultural theories, such as the one proposed by Cohen (1955 [Chapter 12]), that portray youngsters as learning a value system that celebrates crime and opposes prosocial normative standards. In these subcultures, conventional society is stood on its head. "Conformity" entails following antisocial values and breaking the law without guilt or remorse.

Most youths, observe Sykes and Matza, cannot escape the powerful socializing influences of conventional society. Subcultural members are the rare exception, not the rule. Parents, teachers, ministers, and criminal justice officials provide a unified message that crime is wrong and that youngsters should obey the law. Under normal circumstances, therefore, children come to internalize and believe in the morality of the dominant normative system. Thoughts of violating normative standards evoke feelings of guilt and shame. Individuals know and respect right from wrong. As a result, they are controlled by their conventional beliefs.

But if this is so, how is it possible—as Sykes and Matza put it—that people violate laws that they believe in? Sykes and Matza's contribution is in developing a *theory of how controls are neutralized*. They argue that there are sets of beliefs that, when invoked, in effect say that it is "okay" to commit a criminal act "in this circumstance." They group these crime-justifying beliefs into five categories, which they call "techniques of neutralization."

To give but one example, many college students illegally download music and computer programs. These same students would never even think to pilfer a fellow student's books, cell phone, or purse, for this would be "stealing" and clearly morally wrong. After all, they are not "thieves." But appropriating music and software incurs little guilt or shame because it can be justified by explaining that such conduct "does not hurt anyone." This technique, which neutralizes normative controls, is what Sykes and Matza call "denial of injury." Another neutralizing justification might be that music and computer companies are monopolistic and charge excessively high prices. They are unfair and deserve to have their property taken. Sykes and Matza would term this "denial of the victim." There is, in fact,

some evidence that these types of beliefs identified by Sykes and Matza do facilitate criminal involvement not only for juveniles but also for adults (Benson, 1985; Maruna and Copes, 2005).

In a way, Sykes and Matza bridge differential association and control theories. Similar to the Sutherland tradition, they argue that learned beliefs or definitions lead to crime. But similar to control theory, they do not see a society wracked by culture conflict. Rather, in their theoretical world, there is a dominant normative system about which there is consensus and into which virtually everyone is socialized. Again, this means that controls are present over most of us most of the time. The theoretical task is to explain why, under certain circumstances, individuals are able to ignore the very normative standards that they typically believe and that typically control them. For Sykes and Matza, techniques of neutralization comprise the solution to this criminological puzzle.

Matza (1964) subsequently expanded these ideas in his classic book *Delinquency and Drift*. At the core of this effort was an attempt to normalize delinquents—to show that they were not so different from so-called conventional youngsters. He did so in two ways.

First, in Chapter 43, we will review Terrie Moffitt's (1993) theory in which she distinguishes between two types of antisocial youths. As the label implies, "adolescent-limited" offenders are those who confine their delinquency to the teenage years. Most antisocial teenagers follow this path of development, and, in this sense, it can be considered normal. "Life-course-persistent" offenders are those who start to manifest conduct problems early in life, become serious delinquents, and persist in their criminality well into adulthood. This second group is small in size and is ensnared in a problematic developmental pathway. For the most part, Matza was theorizing about the typical delinquent whose delinquent acts were limited to adolescence. He made much of what he called "maturational reform," noting that the majority of wayward youths do not become adult criminals. He criticized other theories, especially subcultural perspectives that depicted delinquents as fully embracing a criminal culture. Matza (1964: 21–22) said that such approaches suffered from an "embarrassment of riches" in the sense that they attributed too much criminality to their subjects. By seeing offenders as different and as constrained to break the law, they could not explain why the typical delinquent would ever stop offending and become a conventional adult.

Second, Matza (1964) proposed that youths were not constantly preoccupied with crime and driven to break the law. He noted that despite having ubiquitous opportunities to offend, for most youths "delinquency fails to occur during all but a tiny proportion of those moments" (1964: 69). Most often, they are "distracted and restrained by convention from the commission of offenses" (p. 69) Only "episodically" are they "released from the moral bind of conventional order" (p. 69). One way this release occurs, of course, is by using techniques of neutralization (Sykes and Matza, 1957).

In a key contention, Matza asserted that "during release the delinquent is not constrained to commit offense; rather he is free to drift into delinquency" (1964: 69). The concept of "drift" is Matza's main theoretical contribution. Rejecting the image of the constrained, driven delinquent, he noted that "drift stands midway between freedom and control" (p. 28). A delinquent act is influenced by factors such as having committed crimes in the past ("preparation") and a fatalistic sense that an act must be carried out ("desperation"). But a delinquent act is also chosen, a reflection of a youth's "will" to offend. "Will, by definition, is something that may or may not be exercised," observed Matza. "Will is an option" (p. 191). In contemporary criminology, Matza's focus on the subjective decision to act is called "human agency," and it represents an important but debated line of inquiry (see, e.g., Brezina, 2020; Cullen, 2017; Laub and Sampson, 2003 [Chapter 44]; Paternoster and Bushway, 2009 [Chapter 45]). More broadly, as a classic contribution, Matza's *Delinquency and Drift* contains many theoretical insights that remain relevant today (see Blomberg et al., 2018).

Containment Theory

Twentieth-century sociological criminology was largely dominated by the "Big Three" theories: strain, differential association (also called "cultural deviance" or "social learning"), and control. As noted above, Travis Hirschi clearly demarcated these three perspectives and called for a rigorous empirical competition to see which theory would still be standing after all the data were counted.

Walter Reckless was equally perceptive about the need to "make sense" of the prevailing theoretical paradigms so as to show how his "containment theory" differed. His terminology proved to be less compelling than Hirschi's characterization of competing frameworks; still, he offered a similar understanding of alternative theories and of what was distinctive and important about his brand of control theory.

Thus, Reckless identified two categories of theories that were popular in his day: "push" theories and "pull" theories. When answering why people committed criminal acts, push theories demarcated forces that would "push" or propel individuals onto the other side of the law. Strain theories fell into this category (see Part IV). Reckless also believed that Bonger's depiction of the way capitalism creates intense pressures toward crime would qualify as a push theory (see Chapter 21 in this volume). In contrast, pull theories showed how people could be lured into crime by providing antisocial models and criminal companions. Differential association or social learning theories would fall into this rubric (see Part III). Reckless also made room for pushes toward crime that emerge from deeply within the individual. Although this line of analysis was not well developed, he argued that pushes could be "psychologic or organic in origin" and include

> ... extreme restlessness and discontent, marked inner tensions, hostility, aggressiveness, aggrandizement and need for immediate gratification, extreme suggestibility, rebellion against authority, sibling rivalry, hypersensitivity, strong feelings of inadequacy and inferiority, guilt reactions, mental conflicts, anxieties, compulsions, phobias, organic impairments (brain damage, epilepsy, and so on). (Reckless, 1961: 356)

In making these observations, he recognized that individual traits could be implicated in crime causation (see Parts I, XII, and XIII in this volume).

Reckless believed, however, that "push" and "pull" theories were incomplete. His main criticism was that they assumed that there was an ineluctable relationship between a strong push or pull and participating in crime. To be sure, Reckless was schooled at the University of Chicago and was intellectually partial to Shaw and McKay's (Chapter 3) perspective on crime. He agreed that social disorganization was an important source of wayward conduct—a point we will return to shortly. Reckless had an insight, however, that escaped others: What about the "good boy" in the "bad areas"? In disorganized inner-city neighborhoods, many boys (and girls) did not succumb to the criminogenic pushes and pulls that surrounded them. How did they *resist* these criminal influences? What made them different from the boys (and girls) who were propelled or lured into crime? In a series of empirical studies, Reckless proposed that a "good self-concept" *insulated* these boys from the "bad neighborhoods" in which they resided (see Reckless et al., 1957; see also Scarpitti, 2002). But self-concept was only one factor that played a role in insulating against crime and in controlling wayward impulses. A more comprehensive "containment theory" was needed to capture Reckless's (1961) thoughts on this matter. Indeed, a major advantage of Reckless's theory was that its scope included internal and external sources of control. Notably, subsequent control theories would tend to emphasize the importance of one or the other of these dimensions.

Reckless grouped one important set of controls under the category of "outer containment." To a large extent, this insight arose from his witnessing the disorganization that prevailed in Chicago during his graduate school days. But Reckless had another source for his insight: anthropology (see 1961: 337–340). At one point, he had considered a

scholarly career in archaeology and had traveled to the Middle East. During this venture, he was struck by how "contained" these societies were—how unlike they were from the more socially open United States—and thus how little crime was experienced (personal interview with F. Cullen, 1980). In any event, for Reckless, outer containment is substantially the opposite of social disorganization. It occurs when individuals are enmeshed in "effective family life and an effective supporting structure in the neighborhood and the larger society" (1961: 352).

Again, however, Reckless realized that outer containment was often weak or not sufficiently strong to control the strong pulls and pushes individuals might experience. In such cases, the crucial last line of defense was whether a person had developed "inner containment." Reckless (1961: 355) included a lengthy roster of components within this construct:

> ... inner containment consists of good self-control, ego strength, well developed superego (conscience), good self-concept, high resistance to diversions, high frustration tolerance, high sense of responsibility, goal orientation, ability to find substitute satisfactions, tension-reducing rationalizations, and so on.

In the end, Reckless's multidimensional concept of inner containment may have proved too detailed and too difficult to measure. Indeed, it is instructive that his own empirical research focused only on the "self-concept as an insulator." One recent study has attempted to revitalize containment theory, providing empirical support for core propositions (Janssen et al., forthcoming). Still, this work remains the exception to the rule. Scientific paradigms, including criminological theories, earn support not only based on their potential accuracy but also based on whether they are stated in a parsimonious way such that they can be easily understood and tested. Travis Hirschi's "social bond theory" would have these characteristics. He would clearly specify four social bonds (attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief) and then show how these bonds could be measured and tested against competing theories. Combined with its intellectual rigor, the parsimony and testability of his perspective would contribute to social bond theory playing a major role in American criminology to this day (Costello and Laub, 2020; Oleson and Costello, 2019).

Social Bond Theory

Although often unstated, most theories of crime make assumptions about human nature and its potential influence on behavior. For strain and cultural deviance theories, humans are usually considered to be "blank slates" onto which society writes its script for the person's life. On occasion, scholars in these traditions will admit that humans have innate or universal drives, but they do not see these forces as inherently criminogenic. Take, for example, the ninth proposition of Sutherland's differential association theory (see Chapter 7), which states that "while criminal behavior is an expression of general needs and values, it is not explained by those general needs and values since noncriminal behavior is an expression of the same needs and values" (Sutherland and Cressey, 1970: 76).

Once they have rejected the notion that humans are driven to break the law because of their "nature," strain and cultural deviance theorists must address the question: "Well, then, why do people commit crimes?" The theoretical challenge is to discern what social conditions *motivate* individuals to engage in illegal acts. For strain theory, the motivation is rooted in negative social relations and experiences that expose people to strain; crime is a way of relieving or otherwise responding to this strain. For cultural deviance or learning theories, the motivation is created by social relations or experiences in which individuals learn to positively value crime, at least under some circumstances. Just as youths learn to like going to baseball games, they can learn to like breaking windows, shoplifting from stores, and beating up others.

As Hirschi notes, control theorists start out with a different premise about human nature: people will "naturally" break the law. It is not necessary to show that humans have an "id," as psychoanalytic theory would suggest, or that they have unique "animal impulses" or are innately aggressive, as some biological theories contend. Rather, for control theorists, it is sufficient to observe that like other animals, humans seek gratification and that crime is often an easy means to secure such gratification (see also Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). People may vary in their need for gratification, but humans generally have enough desire to seek pleasure that they have ample motivation to commit crimes on a regular basis.

This assumption has important theoretical implications (Costello, 2013). If all humans have motivations for crime, then theories that set forth special explanations of criminal motivation—such as strain and cultural deviance theories—are not needed. They are explaining something that does not need explaining; they are addressing the wrong question. Thus, rather than asking, "Why do they do it?," criminologists should be asking, "Why don't they do it?" (Hirschi, 1969: 34). That is, if humans' natural pursuit of gratification makes crime attractive, what is it that stops them from acting on this impulse?

The answer, of course, is the *control* that society exerts over individuals. According to Hirschi (1969: 16), "control theories assume that delinquent acts result when an individual's bond to society is weak or broken." It follows that *variation in control*, not variation in motivation, explains why some people break the law more than others. The theoretical task thus is to uncover the nature of social control and how it constrains people from acting out their underlying wayward urges.

In *Causes of Delinquency* (1969), Hirschi set forth what remains, even to this day, the most influential variant of control theory, which he called "social bond" theory (see the selection in Chapter 16; Costello and Laub, 2020). This perspective is distinctly sociological, because Hirschi focused not on internal controls, such as a superego or inner containment, but rather on how an individual's *bond* to *society* influences decisions to break the law. He did not deny that internal controls exist—individual conduct is affected by what people think and anticipate will happen to them—but ultimately these controls originate with and are sustained by the person's bond to society.

Hirschi's theoretical genius is seen in his willingness to move beyond the general proposition that weak controls cause crime to specifying the four major elements of the social bond: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. In essence, Hirschi argued that delinquency would be low among youngsters who are attached to and care about the opinions of others—especially their parents, whose commitment to school gives them a strong investment in conformity that they do not wish to risk by getting into trouble, who are involved in conventional activities that occupy their time, and who believe they should obey rules. In contrast, youths who are not close to their parents, have few prospects for a successful future, are idle after school hours, and have no allegiance to conventional morality are prime candidates for delinquency.

Self-Control Theory

Two decades after the publication of *Causes of Delinquency,* Travis Hirschi joined with Michael Gottfredson to author *A General Theory of Crime* (1990), a volume in which he set forth the premise that a lack of "self-control" was the chief source of criminal behavior (see Chapter 17 in this part). In this book, Gottfredson and Hirschi did not explicitly try to reconcile social bond and self-control theories. It is clear, however, that Hirschi's thinking about crime had changed over time and that his latest work was a marked departure from his earlier theorizing. In particular, whereas Hirschi's social bond theory located control in a person's *relation to society*, self-control theory

moved the locus of control *inside the individual*. To a large extent, Hirschi now saw crime as rooted not in social experiences but in individual differences that developed early in life and had effects across the life course (see Parts XII and XIII).

Gottfredson and Hirschi embraced the view that criminal behavior is gratifying; indeed, they observed that crime is an easy source of short-term pleasure because committing a crime requires few skills and opportunities to offend are readily available. Why, then, would people bypass the chance to gain easy gratification through crime? Why don't they do it? The answer to this classic control theory question, as in *Causes of Delinquency*, is that controls hold these impulses in check, but unlike before, Gottfredson and Hirschi asserted that self-control, not social bonds, is the chief source of resistance against criminal temptations.

Social bond theory was largely an explanation of *juvenile* delinquency, focusing on how adolescents attach to parents, commit to school, are involved in recreational activities, and the like. By 1990, however, research had revealed that many wayward youths do not suddenly become seriously delinquent in their teen years. Instead, they begin to manifest conduct problems in childhood—problems that evolve into delinquency (see Moffitt, 1993 [Chapter 43]; Patterson et al., 1989). This continuity or stability in misconduct suggests that the roots of crime lie not in adolescence but in the first years of life. It would follow, of course, that criminologists should search for the causes of crime in childhood and not, as had previously been the case, in the experiences of juveniles in the teenage years.

The critical social milieu in childhood is the family, and the critical experiences children encounter are intimately shaped by their parents. What, then, distinguishes the children who can resist seeking immediate gratification from those who act on their impulses, engaging in such precursors of delinquency as stealing, bullying, and lying? For Gottfredson and Hirschi, the key differentiating factor is whether a child can exercise "self-control." They reject the idea that this self-control is caused by biological predispositions (see, however, Wright and Beaver, 2005). Instead, here they remain sociologists in attributing the inculcation of self-control to how parents raise their children. In particular, they assert that parents who monitor their children, recognize deviant behavior when it occurs, and then correct this conduct will instill self-control. Conversely, say Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990: 97), "the major 'cause' of low self-control thus appears to be ineffective child-rearing" (for an assessment of this parenting thesis, see Cullen et al., 2008; Hay and Meldrum, 2016).

Gottfredson and Hirschi contend that the level of self-control, once established in childhood, is an enduring propensity or individual difference that has *general* effects in a person's life. This explains why there is stability of offending across the life course. The continuing lack of self-control also explains why criminal offenders also engage in activities that are "analogous" to crime—that is, acts, such as smoking, drinking, skipping school, having unprotected sex, and driving fast, which, like crime, provide easy and immediate gratification. As Gottfredson and Hirschi note, traditional sociological theories of crime have not shown that they can account for these key empirical facts: the early emergence of conduct problems, the stability of offending, and the participation of criminals in wide-ranging forms of deviance.

Notably, since its publication in 1990, Gottfredson and Hirschi's theory has been subjected to extensive conceptual analysis and empirical investigation (see Burt, 2020; Goode, 2008). Thus, scholars have shown that the concept of self-control has various dimensions. According to Tittle et al. (2004), individuals not only vary in the *capacity* for self-control—as Gottfredson and Hirschi argue—but also in their *desire* to exercise control. In this vein, Muraven et al. (2006) suggest that self-control is not stable in a situation—again as Gottfredson and Hirschi argue—but can experience *depletion* if, similar to a muscle that loses strength, it is overused in a short period of time. It is further relevant that some of the bolder claims of the theory have not been supported, such as the contention that social learning variables (e.g., antisocial values) are unrelated to crime. Even so, there is now extensive evidence linking self-control to crime and "analogous behaviors" across social groups (e.g., gender and age) and across cultures

(Gottfredson, 2006; Hay and Meldrum, 2016; Pratt and Cullen, 2000; Vazsonyi et al., 2017). Furthermore, research shows that low self-control is a predictor of being victimized by a crime (Pratt et al., 2014).

Social Bonds Across the Life Course

Although they share certain features because they are both control theories, self-control theory and social bond theory are incompatible in fundamental ways (cf. Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1995, with Sampson and Laub, 1995; see also Pratt, 2016). Social bond theory asserts that experiences beyond childhood can affect a person's ties to conventional society, and thus that as bonds strengthen or weaken, people's involvement in crime can ebb and flow. In contrast, self-control theory contends that criminal propensities are established in childhood, and thus that misconduct is stable across the life course. Even more provocatively, self-control theory claims that any apparent empirical relationship between social bonds (e.g., attachment to others, commitment to schooling) and crime is spurious. Self-control would account for both the bond and the level of crime. Thus, if being in a good marriage is associated with less crime, Gottfredson and Hirschi would argue that this is because people with high levels of self-control are both more likely to have good marriages and less likely to engage in crime.

Ironically, social bond theory received its most potent shot in the arm from two former students of Gottfredson and Hirschi, Robert Sampson and John Laub (1993). Sampson and Laub agree with their mentors that sociological theorists have largely neglected the "considerable evidence that antisocial behavior is relatively stable across stages of the life course" (1993: 11). But they take Gottfredson and Hirschi to task for committing what Elliott Currie (1985: 185) calls the "fallacy of intractability—the belief that because childhood problems often appear early in life, they are therefore fundamentally irreversible, portents of criminality worsening into adulthood." While there is continuity in antisocial behavior, observe Sampson and Laub, there is also *change*. Some problem children grow up to be delinquents, but others do not; some delinquents become adult criminals, but others do not; some adult criminals persist in their offending, but others do not.

Individual difference theories, such as Gottfredson and Hirschi's self-control theory, are adept at explaining *continuity* in problem behavior. Once equipped with an enduring criminal propensity, people carry this trait from situation to situation and from one age to the next. These theories encounter difficulty, however, in explaining *change* in behavior. If, for example, a person has low self-control, why would he or she ever stop being criminal? Or why would a juvenile who had no record of childhood misconduct—and thus whose parents instilled self-control—start getting into trouble in the teenage years (see Moffitt, Chapter 43)?

Using a life-course perspective, Sampson and Laub suggest that people usually are on certain "trajectories" that result in continuity of behavior. Even so, people also experience "transitions," life events that may serve as "turning points" that evoke behavioral change. Sampson and Laub propose that establishing *social bonds*, such as through schooling or marriage, is a salient reason why people are redirected away from crime and into conformity. Explaining change, in short, requires a consideration of sociological factors.

Although borrowing from Hirschi's social bond theory, Sampson and Laub do not simply rehash this perspective. First, while Hirschi focused on the juvenile years, Sampson and Laub examine the entire life course, from childhood to adulthood. Second, they develop an integrated theoretical perspective, accepting that individual differences and social bonds combine to explain the onset of and desistance from criminal behavior. Third, they argue that the key issue is not whether a social bond exists but whether the bond is of high *quality*. Quality relationships—such as a good marriage or a rewarding job—engender close attachment, growing commitment, and reciprocity. In turn, note

Sampson and Laub (1993: 141), "relations characterized by an extensive set of obligations, expectations, and interdependent social networks are better able to facilitate social control."

As discussed above, Sampson and Laub merged social bond theory with the notion that crime should be studied as a developmental process that occurs across the life course. Their contribution is thus two-fold. First, they elaborate social bond theory and show its relevance not only to crime in adolescence but also to crime in adulthood. Importantly, their theory argues that informal social controls are *age-graded*, with different types of bonds affecting individuals at different stages in life (e.g., bonds to parents in childhood, to school in adolescence, to work in adulthood). The evidence is largely consistent with their theoretical predictions (Laub et al., 2006).

However, recent research suggests that in adulthood, desisting from crime may often precede rather than be the consequence of the formation of social bonds (Skardhamar and Savolainen, 2014; Skardhamar et al., 2015). That is, offenders may have to give up criminal endeavors before they will be capable of building a quality marriage and retaining a good job—a causal order opposite of what Sampson and Laub (1993) propose. Of course, it also is possible that desistance and social bonds have a reciprocal relationship, with each affecting the other as the process of leaving a life in crime unfolds.

Second, they furnish one of the most important *life-course theories of crime*, a model that accounts for both continuity and change across time. For this reason, although we have discussed Sampson and Laub's perspective with regard to social bond theory here, their work is relevant to Part XIII, where perspectives that explore "Getting Into and Out of Crime: Life-Course Theories" are discussed. In this section, we review their more recent theoretical views (Laub and Sampson, 2003 [Chapter 44]). At that later juncture, we will also have more to say about how Sampson and Laub's ideas converge with and differ from competing life-course theories of crime, including Gottfredson and Hirschi's self-control approach.

References

Benson, Michael L. 1985. “Denying the Guilty Mind: Accounting for Involvement in a White-Collar Crime.” *Criminology* **23**: 583–607.

Burt, Callie H. 2020. “Self-Control and Crime: Beyond Gottfredson & Hirschi’s Theory.” *Annual Review of Criminology* **3**: 43–73.

Blomberg, Thomas G., Francis T. Cullen, Christoffer Carlsson, and Cheryl Lero Jonson, eds. 2018. *Delinquency and Drift Revisited: The Criminology of David Matza and Beyond—Advances in Criminological Theory,* Volume **21**. New York: Routledge.

Brezina, Timothy. 2020. “Freedom of Action, Freedom of Choice, and Desistance from Crime: Pitfalls and Opportunities in the Study of Human Agency.” *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology* **6**: 224–244.

Britt, Chester L. and Barbara J. Costello. 2015. “Strength of Control Theory.” In Francis T. Cullen, Pamela Wilcox, Robert J. Sampson, and Brendan D. Dooley (eds.), *Challenging Criminological Theory: The Legacy of Ruth Kornhauser—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **19**, pp. 167–191. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Cohen, Albert K. 1955. *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang*. New York: Free Press.

Costello, Barbara J. 2013. “Hirschi’s Criminology.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*. pp. 131–142. New York: Oxford University Press.

Costello, Barbara J. and John H. Laub. 2020. “Social Control Theory: The Legacy of Travis Hirschi’s *Causes of Delinquency*.” *Annual Review of Criminology* **3**: 21–41.

Cullen, Francis T. 2017. “Choosing Our Criminological Future: Reservations About Human Agency as an Organizing Concept.” *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology* **3**: 373–379.

Cullen, Francis T., James D. Unnever, John Paul Wright, and Kevin M. Beaver. 2008. “Parenting and Self-Control.” In Erich Goode (ed.), *Out of Control: Assessing the General Theory of Crime*. pp. 61–74. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Currie, Elliott. 1985. *Confronting Crime: An American Challenge*. New York: Pantheon.

Goode, Erich, ed. 2008. *Out of Control: Assessing the General Theory of Crime*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Gottfredson, Michael R. 2006. “The Empirical Status of Control Theory in Criminology.” In Francis T. Cullen, John Paul Wright, and Kristie R. Blevins (eds.), *Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **15**, pp. 77–100. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Gottfredson, Michael R. and Travis Hirschi. 1990. *A General Theory of Crime*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Hay, Carter and Ryan Meldrum. 2016. *Self-Control and Crime over the Life Course*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hirschi, Travis. 1969. *Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hirschi, Travis and Michael R. Gottfredson. 1995. “Control Theory and the Life-Course Perspective.” *Studies on Crime and Crime Prevention* **4**: 131–142.

Janssen, H. J., Gerben J. N. Bruinsma, and Frank M. Weerman. Forthcoming. “Can Inner and Outer Containment Counteract Pulls and Pushes Toward Delinquency? A Test of Walter Reckless’s Containment Theory.” *European*

Journal of Criminology.

Kornhauser, Ruth Rosner. 1978. *Social Sources of Delinquency: An Appraisal of Analytic Models*. Chicago: University of Chicago.

Laub, John H. and Robert J. Sampson. 2003. *Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives: Delinquent Boys to Age 70*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Laub, John H., Robert J. Sampson, and Gary Sweeten. 2006. "Assessing Sampson and Laub's Life-Course Theory of Crime." In Francis T. Cullen, John Paul Wright, and Kristie R. Blevins (eds.), *Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **15**, pp. 313–333. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Maruna, Shadd and Heath Copes. 2005. "What Have We Learned from Five Decades of Neutralization Research?" In Michael Tonry (ed.), *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, Volume **32**, pp. 221–320. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Matza, David. 1964. *Delinquency and Drift*. New York: John Wiley.

Moffitt, Terrie E. 1993. "Adolescence-Limited and Life-Course-Persistent Antisocial Behavior: A Developmental Taxonomy." *Psychological Review* **100**: 674–701.

Muraven, Mark, Greg Pogarsky, and Dikla Shmueli. 2006. "Self-Control Depletion and the General Theory of Crime." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **22**: 263–277.

Nye, F. Ivan. 1958. *Family Relationships and Delinquent Behavior*. New York: John Wiley.

Oleson, James C. and Barbara J. Costello, eds. 2019. *Fifty Years of Causes of Delinquency: The Criminology of Travis Hirschi—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **25**. New York: Routledge.

Paternoster, Ray and Shawn Bushway. 2009. "Desistance and the Feared Self: Toward an Identity Theory of Criminal Desistance." *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* **99**: 1103–1156.

Patterson, Gerald R., Barbara DeBaryshe, and Elizabeth Ramsey. 1989. "A Developmental Perspective on Antisocial Behavior." *American Psychologist* **44**: 329–335.

Pratt, Travis C. 2016. "A Self-Control/Life-Course Theory of Criminal Behavior." *European Journal of Criminology* **13**: 129–146.

Pratt, Travis C. and Francis T. Cullen. 2000. "The Empirical Status of Gottfredson and Hirschi's General Theory of Crime: A Meta-Analysis." *Criminology* **38**: 931–964.

Pratt, Travis C., Jillian J. Turanovic, Kathleen A. Fox, Keven A. Wright. 2014. "Self-Control and Victimization: A Meta-Analysis." *Criminology* **52**: 87–116.

Reckless, Walter C. 1961. *The Crime Problem*, 3rd edition. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

Reckless, Walter C., Simon Dinitz, and Ellen Murray. 1957. "The 'Good Boy' in a High Delinquency Area." *Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science* **48**: 18–25.

Reiss, Albert J., Jr. 1951. "Delinquency as the Failure of Personal and Social Controls." *American Sociological Review* **16**: 196–207.

Sampson, Robert J. and John H. Laub. 1993. *Crime in the Making: Pathways and Turning Points Through Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

____. 1995. "Understanding Variability in Lives Through Time: Contributions of Life Course Criminology." *Studies on Crime and Crime Prevention* **4**: 143–158.

Scarpitti, Frank R. 2002. “The Good Boy in a High Delinquency Area—40 Years Later.” In Gilbert Geis and Mary Dodge (eds.), *Lessons of Criminology*, pp. 65–94. Cincinnati: Anderson.

Skardhamar, Torbjørn and Jukka Savolainen. 2014. “Changes in Criminal Offending Around the Time of Job Entry: A Study of Employment and Desistance.” *Criminology* **52**: 263–291.

Skardhamar, Torbjørn, Jukka Savolainen, Kjersti N. Aase, and Torkild H. Lyngstad. 2015. “Does Marriage Reduce Crime?” In Michael Tonry (ed.), *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, Volume **44**, pp. 385–446. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sutherland, Edwin H. and Donald R. Cressey. 1970. *Principles of Criminology*, 8th edition. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott.

Sykes, Gresham M. and David Matza. 1957. “Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency.” *American Sociological Review* **22**: 664–673.

Tittle, Charles R., David A. Ward, and Harold G. Grasmick. 2004. “Capacity for Self-Control and Individuals’ Interest in Exercising Self-Control.” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **20**: 143–172.

Vazsonyi, Alexander T., Jakub Mikuška, and Erin L. Kelley. 2017. “It’s Time: A Meta-Analysis on the Self-Control–Deviance Link.” *Journal of Criminal Justice* **48**: 48–63.

Wright, John Paul and Kevin M. Beaver. 2005. “Do Parents Matter in Creating Self-Control in Their Children? A Genetically Informed Test of Gottfredson and Hirschi’s Theory of Low Self-Control.” *Criminology* **43**: 1169–1202.

15.
Techniques of Neutralization*

Gresham M. Sykes

David Matza

Sykes and Matza, like Sutherland, feel that criminal behavior is learned. And like Sutherland, they feel that part of that learning involves "motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes favorable to violation of law." They state, however, that the specific content of these rationalizations and attitudes has not received much attention. When they wrote their article in 1957, the dominant view was that delinquents held values that were the opposite of middle-class values. Delinquents in particular were said to generally approve of acts such as theft and fighting. This position, represented in the work of Albert Cohen (see Chapter 12 in Part IV), is attacked by Sykes and Matza (see also Matza, 1964).

The first part of their article presents evidence suggesting that delinquents do not generally approve of delinquency. The second part of their article presents an alternative formulation in which they contend that delinquents are able to engage in delinquency by employing certain "techniques of neutralization." Although delinquents believe that delinquency is generally bad, they claim that their delinquent acts are justified for any one of several reasons (e.g., the victim had it coming, they didn't really hurt anybody). These justifications are said to be used before the delinquent act and to make the delinquent act possible by neutralizing the individual's belief that it is bad. Although Sykes and Matza identified five of these techniques, subsequent scholars have elaborated their insights into a more complex theoretical model (see Kaptein and van Helvoort, 2019).

Because Sykes and Matza believe that these justifications for crime are learned, they are sometimes defined as "learning" theorists in the Sutherland tradition (see Part III). In a fundamental way, however, their perspective is a control theory. Thus, Sykes and Matza do not see offenders as members of delinquent subcultures immune from the larger society's normative mandates. Rather, youngsters are socialized to hold conventional or prosocial beliefs that would typically prevent them from breaking the law. It is only when these normative controls are neutralized that individuals are able to commit specific criminal acts under specific circumstances. In short, techniques of neutralization are the mechanisms that people use to escape society's controls and feel free to engage in crime.

Data provide some support for neutralization theory. Much evidence suggests that offenders commonly justify or excuse their crimes using the neutralizations described by Sykes and Matza, as well as additional neutralizations identified by others (see Maruna and Copes, 2005). This is true of rapists (Scully and Marolla, 1984), white-collar criminals (Benson, 1985), and others. Further, studies indicate that individuals differ in the extent to which they accept the neutralizations (Topalli et al., 2014). Those individuals who accept more neutralizations usually engage in more crime. Some argue that this is because offenders use neutralizations to justify or excuse their crimes after the fact, but a few studies using longitudinal data have found that individuals who accept more neutralizations engage in more subsequent crime (see Agnew, 1994). Another possibility is that neutralizations and delinquency have a reciprocal relationship, with each reinforcing the other over time (Topalli et al., 2014). Studies also suggest that the effect of neutralizations on crime is influenced by several factors (see Agnew, 1994). Neutralizations, for

example, are more likely to lead to crime among individuals who associate with delinquent peers. Such findings reflect the fact that neutralizations do not so much cause crime as make it easier for motivated individuals to engage in crime (by reducing their guilt).

The data, then, do suggest that the techniques of neutralization may well be a "crucial component" of Sutherland's "definitions favorable to violation of law." Maruna and Copes (2005) provide an excellent overview of the research on neutralization theory and provide several suggestions for further research. For example, they suggest that some neutralizations may be more likely than others to foster crime.

References

Agnew, Robert. 1994. "The Techniques of Neutralization and Violence." *Criminology* **32**: 555–580.

Benson, Michael L. 1985. "Denying the Guilty Mind: Accounting for Involvement in White-Collar Crime." *Criminology* **23**: 583–608.

Kaptein, Muel and Martien van Helvoort. 2019. "A Model of Neutralization Techniques." *Deviant Behavior* **40**: 1260–1285.

Maruna, Shadd and Heith Copes. 2005. "What Have We Learned From Five Decades of Neutralization Research?" In Michael Tonry (ed.), *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, Volume **32**, pp. 221–320. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Matza, David. 1964. *Delinquency and Drift*. New York: John Wiley.

Scully, Diana and Joseph Marolla. 1984. "Convicted Rapists' Vocabulary of Motive: Excuses and Justifications." *Social Problems* **31**: 530–544.

Topalli, Volkan, George E. Higgins, and Heith Copes. 2014. "A Causal Model of Neutralization Acceptance and Delinquency: Making the Case for an Individual Differences Model." *Criminal Justice and Behavior* **4**: 553–573.

In attempting to uncover the roots of juvenile delinquency, the social scientist has long since ceased to search for devils in the mind or stigma of the body. It is now largely agreed that delinquent behavior, like most social behavior, is learned and that it is learned in the process of social interaction.

The classic statement of this position is found in Sutherland's theory of differential association, which asserts that criminal or delinquent behavior involves the learning of (a) techniques of committing crimes and (b) motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes favorable to the violation of law. Unfortunately, the specific content of what is learned —as opposed to the process by which it is learned—has received relatively little attention in either theory or research. Perhaps the single strongest school of thought on the nature of this content has centered on the idea of a delinquent sub-culture. The basic characteristic of the delinquent subculture, it is argued, is a system of values that represents an inversion of the values held by respectable, law-abiding society. The world of the delinquent is the world of the law-abiding turned upside down and its norms constitute a countervailing force directed against the conforming social order. Cohen sees the process of developing a delinquent sub-culture as a matter of building, maintaining, and reinforcing a code for behavior which exists by opposition, which stands in point by point contradiction to dominant values, particularly those of the middle class. Cohen's portrayal of delinquency is executed with a good deal of sophistication, and he carefully avoids overly simple explanations such as those based on the principle of "follow the leader" or easy generalizations about "emotional disturbances." Furthermore, he does not accept the delinquent sub-culture as something given, but instead systematically examines the function of delinquent values as a viable solution to the lower-class, male child's problems in the area of social status. Yet in spite of its virtues, this image of juvenile delinquency as a form of behavior based on competing or countervailing values and norms appears to suffer from a

number of serious defects. It is the nature of these defects and a possible alternative or modified explanation for a large portion of juvenile delinquency with which this paper is concerned.

The difficulties in viewing delinquent behavior as springing from a set of deviant values and norms—as arising, that is to say, from a situation in which the delinquent defines his delinquency as "right"—are both empirical and theoretical. In the first place, if there existed in fact a delinquent sub-culture such that the delinquent viewed his illegal behavior as morally correct, we could reasonably suppose that he would exhibit no feelings of guilt or shame at detection or confinement. Instead, the major reaction would tend in the direction of indignation or a sense of martyrdom. It is true that some delinquents do react in the latter fashion, although the sense of martyrdom often seems to be based on the fact that others "get away with it" and indignation appears to be directed against the chance events or lack of skill that led to apprehension. More important, however, is the fact that there is a good deal of evidence suggesting that many delinquents *do* experience a sense of guilt or shame, and its outward expression is not to be dismissed as a purely manipulative gesture to appease those in authority. Much of this evidence is, to be sure, of a clinical nature or in the form of impressionistic judgments of those who must deal first hand with the youthful offender. Assigning a weight to such evidence calls for caution, but it cannot be ignored if we are to avoid the gross stereotype of the juvenile delinquent as a hardened gangster in miniature.

In the second place, observers have noted that the juvenile delinquent frequently accords admiration and respect to law-abiding persons. The "really honest" is often revered, and if the delinquent is sometimes overly keen to detect hypocrisy in those who conform, unquestioned probity is likely to win his approval. A fierce attachment to a humble, pious mother or a forgiving, upright priest (the former, according to many observers, is often encountered in both juvenile delinquents and adult criminals) might be dismissed as rank sentimentality, but at least it is clear that the delinquent does not necessarily regard those who abide by the legal rules as immoral. In a similar vein, it can be noted that the juvenile delinquent may exhibit great resentment if illegal behavior is imputed to "significant others" in his immediate social environment or to heroes in the world of sport and entertainment. In other words, if the delinquent does hold to a set of values and norms that stand in complete opposition to those of respectable society, his norm-holding is of a peculiar sort. While supposedly thoroughly committed to the deviant system of the delinquent sub-culture, he would appear to recognize the moral validity of the dominant normative system in many instances.

In the third place, there is much evidence that juvenile delinquents often draw a sharp line between those who can be victimized and those who cannot. Certain social groups are not to be viewed as "fair game" in the performance of supposedly approved delinquent acts while others warrant a variety of attacks. In general, the potentiality for victimization would seem to be a function of the social distance between the juvenile delinquent and others and thus we find implicit maxims in the world of the delinquent such as "don't steal from friends" or "don't commit vandalism against a church of your own faith." This is all rather obvious, but the implications have not received sufficient attention. The fact that supposedly valued behavior tends to be directed against disvalued social groups hints that the "wrongfulness" of such delinquent behavior is more widely recognized by delinquents than the literature has indicated. When the pool of victims is limited by considerations of kinship, friendship, ethnic group, social class, age, sex, etc., we have reason to suspect that the virtue of delinquency is far from unquestioned.

In the fourth place, it is doubtful if many juvenile delinquents are totally immune from the demands for conformity made by the dominant social order. There is a strong likelihood that the family of the delinquent will agree with respectable society that delinquency is wrong, even though the family may be engaged in a variety of illegal activities. That is, the parental posture conducive to delinquency is not apt to be a positive prodding. Whatever may be the influence of parental example, what might be called the "Fagin" pattern of socialization into delinquency is probably

rare. Furthermore, as Redl has indicated, the idea that certain neighborhoods are completely delinquent, offering the child a model for delinquent behavior without reservations, is simply not supported by the data.

The fact that a child is punished by parents, school officials, and agencies of the legal system for his delinquency may, as a number of observers have cynically noted, suggest to the child that he should be more careful not to get caught. There is an equal or greater probability, however, that the child will internalize the demands for conformity. This is not to say that demands for conformity cannot be counteracted. In fact, as we shall see shortly, an understanding of how internal and external demands for conformity are neutralized may be crucial for understanding delinquent behavior. But it is to say that a complete denial of the validity of demands for conformity and the substitution of a new normative system is improbable, in light of the child's or adolescent's dependency on adults and encirclement by adults inherent in his status in the social structure. No matter how deeply enmeshed in patterns of delinquency he may be and no matter how much this involvement may outweigh his associations with the law-abiding, he cannot escape the condemnation of his deviance. Somehow the demands for conformity must be met and answered; they cannot be ignored as part of an alien system of values and norms.

In short, the theoretical viewpoint that sees juvenile delinquency as a form of behavior based on the values and norms of a deviant sub-culture in precisely the same way as law-abiding behavior is based on the values and norms of the larger society is open to serious doubt. The fact that the world of the delinquent is embedded in the larger world of those who conform cannot be overlooked nor can the delinquent be equated with an adult thoroughly socialized into an alternative way of life. Instead, the juvenile delinquent would appear to be at least partially committed to the dominant social order in that he frequently exhibits guilt or shame when he violates its proscriptions, accords approval to certain conforming figures, and distinguishes between appropriate and inappropriate targets for his deviance. It is to an explanation for the apparent paradoxical fact of his delinquency that we now turn.

As Morris Cohen once said, one of the most fascinating problems about human behavior is why men violate the laws in which they believe. This is the problem that confronts us when we attempt to explain why delinquency occurs despite a greater or lesser commitment to the usages of conformity. A basic clue is offered by the fact that social rules or norms calling for valued behavior seldom if ever take the form of categorical imperatives. Rather, values or norms appear as *qualified* guides for action, limited in their applicability in terms of time, place, persons, and social circumstances. The moral injunction against killing, for example, does not apply to the enemy during combat in time of war, although a captured enemy comes once again under the prohibition. Similarly, the taking and distributing of scarce goods in a time of acute social need is felt by many to be right, although under other circumstances private property is held inviolable. The normative system of a society, then, is marked by what Williams has termed *flexibility*; it does not consist of a body of rules held to be binding under all conditions.

This flexibility is, in fact, an integral part of the criminal law in that measures for "defenses to crimes" are provided in pleas such as nonage, necessity, insanity, drunkenness, compulsion, self-defense, and so on. The individual can avoid moral culpability for his criminal action—and thus avoid the negative sanctions of society—if he can prove that criminal intent was lacking.

It is our argument that much delinquency is based on what is essentially an unrecognized extension of defenses to crimes, in the form of justifications for deviance that are seen as valid by the delinquent but not by the legal system or society at large.

These justifications are commonly described as rationalizations. They are viewed as following deviant behavior and as protecting the individual from self-blame and the blame of others after the act. But there is also reason to believe that they precede deviant behavior and make deviant behavior possible. It is this possibility that Sutherland

mentioned only in passing and that other writers have failed to exploit from the viewpoint of sociological theory. Disapproval flowing from internalized norms and conforming others in the social environment is neutralized, turned back, or deflected in advance. Social controls that serve to check or inhibit deviant motivational patterns are rendered inoperative, and the individual is freed to engage in delinquency without serious damage to his self image. In this sense, the delinquent both has his cake and eats it too, for he remains committed to the dominant normative system and yet so qualifies its imperatives that violations are "acceptable" if not "right." Thus the delinquent represents not a radical opposition to law-abiding society but something more like an apologetic failure, often more sinned against than sinning in his own eyes. We call these justifications of deviant behavior techniques of neutralization; and we believe these techniques make up a crucial component of Sutherland's "definitions favorable to the violation of law." It is by learning these techniques that the juvenile becomes delinquent, rather than by learning moral imperatives, values or attitudes standing in direct contradiction to those of the dominant society. In analyzing these techniques, we have found it convenient to divide them into five major types.

---

* Reprinted from Gresham M. Sykes and David Matza, "Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency" in the *American Sociological Review* 22. Copyright © 1957.

The Denial of Responsibility

In so far as the delinquent can define himself as lacking responsibility for his deviant actions, the disapproval of self or others is sharply reduced in effectiveness as a restraining influence. As Justice Holmes has said, even a dog distinguishes between being stumbled over and being kicked, and modern society is no less careful to draw a line between injuries that are unintentional, i.e., where responsibility is lacking, and those that are intentional. As a technique of neutralization, however, the denial of responsibility extends much further than the claim that deviant acts are an "accident" or some similar negation of personal accountability. It may also be asserted that delinquent acts are due to forces outside of the individual and beyond his control such as unloving parents, bad companions, or a slum neighborhood. In effect, the delinquent approaches a "billiard ball" conception of himself in which he sees himself as helplessly propelled into new situations. From a psychodynamic viewpoint, this orientation toward one's own actions may represent a profound alienation from self, but it is important to stress the fact that interpretations of responsibility are cultural constructs and not merely idiosyncratic beliefs. The similarity between this mode of justifying illegal behavior assumed by the delinquent and the implications of a "sociological" frame of reference or a "humane" jurisprudence is readily apparent. It is not the validity of this orientation that concerns us here, but its function of deflecting blame attached to violations of social norms and its relative independence of a particular personality structure. By learning to view himself as more acted upon than acting, the delinquent prepares the way for deviance from the dominant normative system without the necessity of a frontal assault on the norms themselves.

The Denial of Injury

A second major technique of neutralization centers on the injury or harm involved in the delinquent act. The criminal law has long made a distinction between crimes which are *mala in se* and *mala prohibita*—that is between acts that are wrong in themselves and acts that are illegal but not immoral—and the delinquent can make the same kind of distinction in evaluating the wrongfulness of his behavior. For the delinquent, however, wrongfulness may turn on the question of whether or not anyone has clearly been hurt by his deviance, and this matter is open to a variety of interpretations. Vandalism, for example, may be defined by the delinquent simply as "mischief"—after all, it may be claimed, the persons whose property has been destroyed can well afford it. Similarly, auto theft may be viewed as "borrowing," and gang fighting may be seen as a private quarrel, an agreed upon duel between two willing parties, and thus of no concern to the community at large. We are not suggesting that this technique of neutralization, labelled the denial of injury, involves an explicit dialectic, rather, we are arguing that the delinquent frequently, and in a hazy fashion, feels that his behavior does not really cause any great harm despite the fact that it runs counter to law. Just as the link between the individual and his acts may be broken by the denial of responsibility, so may the link between acts and their consequences be broken by the denial of injury. Since society sometimes agrees with the delinquent, e.g., in matters such as truancy, "pranks," and so on, it merely reaffirms the idea that the delinquent's neutralization of social controls by means of qualifying the norms is an extension of common practice rather than a gesture of complete opposition.

The Denial of Victim

Even if the delinquent accepts the responsibility for his deviant actions and is willing to admit that his deviant actions involve an injury or hurt, the moral indignation of self and others may be neutralized by an insistence that the injury is not wrong in light of the circumstances. The injury, it may be claimed, is not really an injury; rather, it is a form of rightful retaliation or punishment. By a subtle alchemy the delinquent moves himself into the position of an avenger and the victim is transformed into a wrong-doer. Assaults on homosexuals or suspected homosexuals, attacks on members of minority groups who are said to have gotten "out of place," vandalism as revenge on an unfair teacher or school official, thefts from a "crooked" store owner—all may be hurts inflicted on a transgressor, in the eyes of the delinquent. As Orwell has pointed out, the type of criminal admired by the general public has probably changed over the course of years and Raffles no longer serves as a hero; but Robin Hood, and his latter-day derivatives such as the tough detective seeking justice outside the law, still capture the popular imagination, and the delinquent may view his acts as part of a similar role. To deny the existence of the victim, then, by transforming him into a person deserving injury is an extreme form of a phenomenon we have mentioned before, namely, the delinquent's recognition of appropriate and inappropriate targets for his delinquent acts. In addition, however, the existence of the victim may be denied for the delinquent, in a somewhat different sense, by the circumstances of the delinquent act itself. Insofar as the victim is physically absent, unknown, or a vague abstraction (as is often the case in delinquent acts committed against property), the awareness of the victim's existence is weakened. Internalized norms and anticipations of the reactions of others must somehow be activated, if they are to serve as guides for behavior; and it is possible that a diminished awareness of the victim plays an important part in determining whether or not this process is set in motion.

The Condemnation of the Condemners

A fourth technique of neutralization would appear to involve a condemnation of the condemners or, as McCorkle and Korn have phrased it, a rejection of the rejectors. The delinquent shifts the focus of attention from his own deviant acts to the motives and behavior of those who disapprove of his violations. His condemners, he may claim, are hypocrites, deviants in disguise, or impelled by personal spite. This orientation toward the conforming world may be of particular importance when it hardens into a bitter cynicism directed against those assigned the task of enforcing or expressing the norms of the dominant society. Police, it may be said, are corrupt, stupid, and brutal. Teachers always show favoritism and parents always "take it out" on their children. By a slight extension, the rewards of conformity—such as material success—become a matter of pull or luck, thus decreasing still further the stature of those who stand on the side of the law-abiding. The validity of this jaundiced viewpoint is not so important as its function in turning back or deflecting the negative sanctions attached to violations of the norms. The delinquent, in effect, has changed the subject of the conversation in the dialogue between his own deviant impulses and the reactions of others; and by attacking others, the wrongfulness of his own behavior is more easily repressed or lost to view.

The Appeal to Higher Loyalties

Fifth, and last, internal and external social controls may be neutralized by sacrificing the demands of the larger society for the demands of the smaller social groups to which the delinquent belongs such as the sibling pair, the gang, or the friendship clique. It is important to note that the delinquent does not necessarily repudiate the imperatives of the dominant normative system, despite his failure to follow them. Rather, the delinquent may see himself as caught up in a dilemma that must be resolved, unfortunately, at the cost of violating the law. One aspect of this situation has been studied by Stouffer and Toby in their research on the conflict between particularistic and universalistic demands, between the claims of friendship and general social obligations, and their results suggest that "it is possible to classify people according to a predisposition to select one or the other horn of a dilemma in role conflict." For our purposes, however, the most important point is that deviation from certain norms may occur not because the norms are rejected but because other norms, held to be more pressing or involving a higher loyalty, are accorded precedence. Indeed, it is the fact that both sets of norms are believed in that gives meaning to our concepts of dilemma and role conflict.

The conflict between the claims of friendship and the claims of law, or a similar dilemma, has of course long been recognized by the social scientist (and the novelist) as a common human problem. If the juvenile delinquent frequently resolves his dilemma by insisting that he must "always help a buddy" or "never squeal on a friend," even when it throws him into serious difficulties with the dominant social order, his choice remains familiar to the supposedly law-abiding. The delinquent is unusual, perhaps, in the extent to which he is able to see the fact that he acts in behalf of the smaller social groups to which he belongs as a justification for violations of society's norms, but it is a matter of degree rather than of kind.

"I didn't mean it." "I didn't really hurt anybody." "They had it coming to them." "Everybody's picking on me." "I didn't do it for myself." These slogans or their variants, we hypothesize, prepare the juvenile for delinquent acts. These "definitions of the situation" represent tangential or glancing blows at the dominant normative system rather than the creation of an opposing ideology; and they are extensions of patterns of thought prevalent in society rather than something created de novo.

Techniques of neutralization may not be powerful enough to fully shield the individual from the force of his own internalized values and the reactions of conforming others, for as we have pointed out, juvenile delinquents often appear to suffer from feelings of guilt and shame when called into account for their deviant behavior. And some delinquents may be so isolated from the world of conformity that techniques of neutralization need not be called into play. Nonetheless, we would argue that techniques of neutralization are critical in lessening the effectiveness of social controls and that they lie behind a large share of delinquent behavior.

Empirical research in this area is scattered and fragmentary at the present time, but the work of Redl, Cressy, and others has supplied a body of significant data that has done much to clarify the theoretical issues and enlarge the fund of supporting evidence. Two lines of investigation seem to be critical at this stage. First, there is need for more knowledge concerning the differential distribution of techniques of neutralization, as operative patterns of thought, by age, sex, social class, ethnic group, etc. On a priori grounds it might be assumed that these justifications for deviance will be more readily seized by segments of society for whom a discrepancy between common social ideals and social practice is most apparent. It is also possible however, that the habit of "bending" the dominant normative system—if not "breaking" it—cuts across our cruder social categories and is to be traced primarily to patterns of

social interaction within the familial circle. Second, there is need for a greater understanding of the internal structure of techniques of neutralization, as a system of beliefs and attitudes, and its relationship to various types of delinquent behavior. Certain techniques of neutralization would appear to be better adapted to particular deviant acts than to others, as we have suggested, for example, in the case of offenses against property and the denial of the victim. But the issue remains far from clear and stands in need of more information.

In any case, techniques of neutralization appear to offer a promising line of research in enlarging and systematizing the theoretical grasp of juvenile delinquency. As more information is uncovered concerning techniques of neutralization, their origins, and their consequences, both juvenile delinquency in particular, and deviation from normative systems in general may be illuminated.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In their article, Sykes and Matza paraphrase Morris Cohen: "One of the most fascinating problems about human behavior is why men violate the laws in which they believe." What solution do Sykes and Matza offer to this problem?
2. Most students disapprove of cheating on exams, but many nevertheless cheat. List possible justifications such students might give for their cheating behavior. Which techniques of neutralizations do these justifications illustrate?
3. Sykes and Matza argue that the techniques of neutralization are learned from others. They do not, however, describe those groups or types of individuals that are most likely to employ the techniques of neutralization. What groups or categories of individuals do you think are most likely to employ the techniques of neutralization (and why)?

16.
Social Bond Theory*

Travis Hirschi

Although Causes of Delinquency *is a complex book filled with intricate theoretical discussions and numerous statistical analyses, Hirschi's theory has an appealing quality: It can be simply stated and thus easily understood and studied by criminologists. Indeed, his theory can be reduced to two propositions. First, delinquency and social bonds are inversely related. Second, the concept of social bonds has four elements—attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief—that independently and in combination restrain criminal conduct.*

But how exactly do these bonds exert control over youngsters? Hirschi argued that youths can be attached to peers, teachers, and other adults, although relationships with parents are most crucial. Attachment involves an emotional connection to another person. When such a relationship exists, youths will be more likely to care what that other person thinks of them. In turn, when in a situation where the opportunity for trouble presents itself, they will be restrained from delinquency if they are concerned that such action will disappoint the other person or disrupt this relationship.

The importance of attachment is that during the teenage years, youths are frequently outside their parents' watchful eyes. In such instances, parents cannot exert "direct control"—that is, personally supervise their children and punish misconduct when it occurs. They can, however, exert "indirect control" if youths take into account their parents' preferences. When attachment is strong, observed Hirschi, "the parent is psychologically present when temptation to commit a crime appears. If, in the situation of temptation, no thought is given to parental reaction, the child is to this extent free to commit the act" (1969: 88).

Much like rational choice theory (see Part X), Hirschi suggested that there is a "rational component" to conformity, which he calls "commitment." Juveniles who are doing well in school and have bright prospects ahead are less likely to engage in acts that will jeopardize their future. Conversely, uncommitted youths—those with little or no stake in conformity—have nothing to lose and thus are freer to break the law.

Hirschi also contended that the mere involvement in conventional activities facilitates control. If idleness presents opportunities for crime, filling up a youth's day with wholesome activities—such as school and recreational pursuits—leaves little time for getting into trouble.

Finally, Hirschi (1969: 26) argued that youths who believe that they should "obey the rules of society" are less likely to violate them. The social bond of "belief" is controversial because such beliefs or "definitions" are also central to differential association theory (or what Hirschi called "cultural deviance" theory). Hirschi contended, however, that an important analytical distinction could be made: While cultural deviance theorists like Sutherland (Chapter 7) focus on beliefs that positively value crime ("definitions favorable to violation of law"), control theorists focus on beliefs that proscribe crime. "Delinquency is not caused by beliefs that require delinquency," noted Hirschi (1969: 198), "but rather made possible by the absence of (effective) beliefs that forbid delinquency."

In Causes of Delinquency, *Hirschi undertook a detailed analysis of survey data drawn from the 1964 Richmond (California) Youth Project, showing substantial support for social bond theory. A 1997 replication of Hirschi's study was undertaken using the Fayetteville (Arkansas) Youth Project. The results were remarkably similar (Costello and Anderson, 2019). Over the past half century, social bond theory has been subjected to numerous empirical tests—perhaps more than any other theory. This research reveals a more complicated assessment of Hirschi's perspective (Kempf-Leonard, 2019). Empirical confirmation of the theory varies, for example, by factors such as a study's methodology (Agnew, 1985; Costello and Vowell, 1999; Krohn, 2000; Kubrin et al., 2009). Still, overall there is fairly consistent support for the general thesis that weak social bonds increase the risk of being involved in criminal behavior (Akers and Sellers, 2008; Costello and Laub, 2020; Sampson and Laub, 1993). Hirschi's claim that competing perspectives—especially "cultural deviance" theories—are not empirically viable, however, is mistaken (Akers and Sellers, 2008; Krohn, 2000; Kubrin et al., 2009). A further limitation is that Hirschi's approach is largely astructural and ahistorical. Unlike Shaw and McKay (Chapter 3), he does not examine how macrosocial changes occurring in the United States affect the strength of social bonds for people located in different sectors of American society (see also Sampson and Wilson, 1995 [Chapter 28]; Sampson and Laub, 1994). In fact, in his original analysis, Hirschi (1969) paid no attention to gender and little attention to race (Costello and Laub, 2020; Unnever et al., 2009).*

References

Agnew, Robert. 1985. "Social Control Theory and Delinquency: A Longitudinal Test." *Criminology* **23**: 47–61.

Akers, Ronald L. and Christine S. Sellers. 2008. *Criminological Theories: Introduction, Evaluation, and Application*, 5th edition. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

Costello, Barbara J. and Bradley J. Anderson. 2019. "*Causes of Delinquency* Revisited: Key Findings From the Fayetteville Replication Study." In James C. Oleson and Barbara J. Costello (eds.), *Fifty Years of Causes of Delinquency: The Criminology of Travis Hirschi—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **25**, pp. 65–97. New York: Routledge.

Costello, Barbara J. and John H. Laub. 2020. "Social Control Theory: The Legacy of Travis Hirschi's *Causes of Delinquency*." *Annual Review of Criminology* **3**: 21–41.

Costello, Barbara J. and Paul R. Vowell. 1999. "Testing Control Theory and Differential Association: A Reanalysis of the Richmond Youth Project Data." *Criminology* **37**: 815–842.

Hirschi, Travis. 1969. *Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kempf-Leonard, Kimberly. 2019. "The Status of Hirschi's Social Control Theory After 50 Years." In James C. Oleson and Barbara J. Costello (eds.), *Fifty Years of Causes of Delinquency: The Criminology of Travis Hirschi —Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **25**, pp. 161–208. New York: Routledge.

Krohn, Marvin. 2000. "Control and Deterrence Theories of Criminality." In Joseph F. Sheley (ed.), *Criminology: A Contemporary Handbook*, 3rd edition, pp. 372–399. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Kubrin, Charis E., Thomas D. Stucky, and Marvin D. Krohn. 2009. *Researching Theories of Crime and Deviance*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Sampson, Robert J. and John H. Laub. 1993. *Crime in the Making: Pathways and Turning Points Through Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Sampson, Robert J. and John H. Laub. 1994. "Urban Poverty and the Family Context of Delinquency: A New Look at Structure and Process in a Classic Study." *Child Development* **65**: 523–540.

Sampson, Robert J. and William Julius Wilson. 1995. "Toward a Theory of Race, Crime, and Urban Inequality." In John Hagan and Ruth D. Peterson (eds.), *Crime and Inequality*, pp. 36–54. Stanford, CA: Stanford

University Press.

Unnever, James D., Francis T. Cullen, Scott A. Mathers, Timothy E. McClure, and Marisa C. Allison. 2009. "Racial Discrimination and Hirschi's Criminological Classic: A Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge." *Justice Quarterly* **26**: 377–409.

Three fundamental perspectives on delinquency and deviant behavior dominate the current scene. According to *strain* or motivational theories, legitimate desires that conformity cannot satisfy force a person into deviance. According to *control* or bond theories, a person is free to commit delinquent acts because his ties to the conventional order have somehow been broken. According to *cultural deviance* theories, the deviant conforms to a set of standards not accepted by a larger or more powerful society. Although most current theories of crime and delinquency contain elements of at least two and occasionally all three of these perspectives, reconciliation of their assumptions is very difficult. If, as the control theorist assumes, the ties of many persons to the conventional order may be weak or virtually nonexistent, the strain theorist, in accounting for their deviance, builds into his explanation pressure that is unnecessary. If, on the other hand, it is reasonable to assume with the strain theorist that everyone is at some point strongly tied to *the* conventional system, then it is unreasonable to assume that many are not (control theories), or that many are tied to different "conventional" systems (cultural deviance theories)….

Control theories assume that delinquent acts result when an individual's bond to society is weak or broken. Since these theories embrace two highly complex concepts, the *bond* of the individual to *society*, it is not surprising that they have at one time or another formed the basis of explanations of most forms of aberrant or unusual behavior. It is also not surprising that control theories have described the elements of the bond to society in many ways, and that they have focused on a variety of units as the point of control….

---

* Republished with permission of Taylor and Francis Group LLC Books, from *Causes of Delinquency*, Travis Hirschi, pages 3–4, 16–26, 31–33, 34, 1969; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

Elements of the Bond

Attachment

In explaining conforming behavior, sociologists justly emphasize sensitivity to the opinion of others. Unfortunately, ... they tend to suggest that man *is* sensitive to the opinion of others and thus exclude sensitivity from their explanations of deviant behavior. In explaining deviant behavior, psychologists, in contrast, emphasize insensitivity to the opinion of others. Unfortunately, they too tend to ignore variation, and, in addition, they tend to tie sensitivity inextricably to other variables, to make it part of a syndrome or "type," and thus seriously to reduce its value as an explanatory concept. The psychopath is characterized only in part by "deficient attachment to or affection for others, a failure to respond to the ordinary motivations founded in respect or regard for one's fellows"; he is also characterized by such things as "excessive aggressiveness," "lack of superego control," and "an infantile level of response." Unfortunately, too, the behavior that psychopathy is used to explain often becomes part of the *definition* of psychopathy. As a result, in Barbara Wootton's words:

> [The psychopath] is ... *par excellence*, and without shame or qualification, the model of the circular process by which mental abnormality is inferred from anti-social behavior while anti-social behavior is explained by mental abnormality.

The problems of diagnosis, tautology, and name-calling are avoided if the dimensions of psychopathy are treated as causally and therefore problematically interrelated, rather than as logically and therefore necessarily bound to each other. In fact, it can be argued that all of the characteristics attributed to the psychopath follow from, are effects of, his lack of attachment to others. To say that to lack attachment to others is to be free from moral restraints is to use lack of attachment to explain the guiltlessness of the psychopath, the fact that he apparently has no conscience or superego. In this view, lack of attachment to others is not merely a symptom of psychopathy, it is psychopathy; lack of conscience is just another way of saying the same thing; and the violation of norms is (or may be) a consequence.

For that matter, given that man is an animal, "impulsivity" and "aggressiveness" can also be seen as natural consequences of freedom from moral restraints. However, since the view of man as endowed with natural propensities and capacities like other animals is peculiarly unpalatable to sociologists, we need not fall back on such a view to explain the amoral man's aggressiveness. The process of becoming alienated from others often involves or is based on active interpersonal conflict. Such conflict could easily supply a reservoir of *socially derived* hostility sufficient to account for the aggressiveness of those whose attachments to others have been weakened.

Durkheim said it many years ago: "We are moral beings to the extent that we are social beings." This may be interpreted to mean that we are moral beings to the extent that we have "internalized the norms" of society. But what does it mean to say that a person has internalized the norms of society? The norms of society are by definition shared by the members of society. To violate a norm is, therefore, to act contrary to the wishes and expectations of other people. If a person does not care about the wishes and expectations of other people—that is, if he is insensitive to the opinion of others—then he is to that extent not bound by the norms. He is free to deviate.

The essence of internalization of norms, conscience, or super-ego thus lies in the attachment of the individual to others. This view has several advantages over the concept of internalization. For one, explanations of deviant behavior based on attachment do not beg the question, since the extent to which a person is attached to others can be measured independently of his deviant behavior. Furthermore, change or variation in behavior is explainable in a way that it is not when notions of internalization or superego are used. For example, the divorced man is more likely

after divorce to commit a number of deviant acts, such as suicide or forgery. If we explain these acts by reference to the superego (or internal control), we are forced to say that the man "lost his conscience" when he got a divorce; and, of course, if he remarries, we have to conclude that he gets his conscience back.

This dimension of the bond to conventional society is encountered in most social control-oriented research and theory. F. Ivan Nye's "internal control" and "indirect control" refer to the same element, although we avoid the problem of explaining changes over time by locating the "conscience" in the bond to others rather than making it part of the personality. Attachment to others is just one aspect of Albert J. Reiss's "personal controls"; we avoid his problems of tautological empirical *observations* by making the relationship between attachment and delinquency problematic rather than definitional. Finally, Scott Briar and Irving Piliavin's "commitment" or "stake in conformity" subsumes attachment, as their discussion illustrates, although the terms they use are more closely associated with the next element to be discussed.

Commitment

"Of all passions, that which inclineth men least to break the laws, is fear. Nay, excepting some generous natures, it is the only thing, when there is the appearance of profit or pleasure by breaking the laws, that makes men keep them." Few would deny that men on occasion obey the rules simply from fear of the consequences. This rational component in conformity we label commitment. What does it mean to say that a person is committed to conformity? In Howard S. Becker's formulation it means the following:

> First, the individual is in a position in which his decision with regard to some particular line of action has consequences for other interests and activities not necessarily [directly] related to it. Second, he has placed himself in that position by his own prior actions. A third element is present though so obvious as not to be aware [of other interests] and must recognize that his decision in this case will have ramifications beyond it.

The idea, then, is that the person invests time, energy, himself, in a certain line of activity—say, getting an education, building up a business, acquiring a reputation for virtue. When or whenever he considers deviant behavior, he must consider the costs of this deviant behavior, the risk he runs of losing the investment he has made in conventional labor.

If attachment to others is the sociological counterpart of the superego or conscience, commitment is the counterpart of the ego or common sense. To the person committed to conventional lines of action, risking one to ten years in prison for a ten-dollar holdup is stupidity, because to the committed person the costs and risks obviously exceed ten dollars in value. (To the psychoanalyst, such an act exhibits failure to be governed by the "reality-principle.") In the sociological control theory, it can be and is generally assumed that the decision to commit a criminal act may well be rationally determined—that the actor's decision was not irrational given the risks and costs he faces. Of course, as Becker points out, if the actor is capable of in some sense calculating the costs of a line of action, he is also capable of calculational errors: ignorance and error return, in the control theory, as possible explanations of deviant behavior.

The concept of commitment assumes that the organization of society is such that the interests of most persons would be endangered if they were to engage in criminal acts. Most people, simply by the process of living in an organized society, acquire goods, reputations, prospects that they do not want to risk losing. These accumulations are society's insurance that they will abide by the rules. Many hypotheses about the antecedents of delinquent behavior are based on this premise. For example, Arthur L. Stinchcombe's hypothesis that "high school rebellion … occurs when future status is not clearly related to present performance" suggests that one is committed to conformity not only by what one has but also by what one hopes to obtain. Thus "ambition" and/or "aspiration" play an important role in

producing conformity. The person becomes committed to a conventional line of action, and he is therefore committed to conformity.

Most lines of action in a society are of course conventional. The clearest examples are educational and occupational careers. Actions thought to jeopardize one's chances in these areas are presumably avoided. Interestingly enough, even nonconventional commitments may operate to produce conventional conformity. We are told, at least, that boys aspiring to careers in the rackets or professional thievery are judged by their "honesty" and "reliability"—traits traditionally in demand among seekers of office boys.

Involvement

Many persons undoubtedly owe a life of virtue to a lack of opportunity to do otherwise. Time and energy are inherently limited: "Not that I would not, if I could, be both handsome and fat and well dressed, and a great athlete, and make a million a year, be a wit, a bon vivant, and a lady killer, as well as a philosopher, a philanthropist, a statesman, warrior, and African explorer, as well as a 'tone-poet' and saint. But the thing is simply impossible." The things that William James here says he would like to be or do are all, I suppose, within the realm of conventionality, but if he were to include illicit actions he would still have to eliminate some of them as simply impossible.

Involvement or engrossment in conventional activities is thus often part of a control theory. The assumption, widely shared, is that a person may be simply too busy doing conventional things to find time to engage in deviant behavior. The person involved in conventional activities is tied to appointments, deadlines, working hours, plans, and the like, so the opportunity to commit deviant acts rarely arises. To the extent that he is engrossed in conventional activities, he cannot even think about deviant acts, let alone act out his inclinations.

This line of reasoning is responsible for the stress placed on recreational facilities in many programs to reduce delinquency, for much of the concern with the high school dropout, and for the idea that boys should be drafted into the Army to keep them out of trouble. So obvious and persuasive is the idea that involvement in conventional activities is a major deterrent to delinquency that it was accepted even by Sutherland:

> In the general area of juvenile delinquency it is probable that the most significant difference between juveniles who engage in delinquency and those who do not is that the latter are provided abundant opportunities of a conventional type for satisfying their recreational interests, while the former lack those opportunities or facilities.

The view that "idle hands are the devil's workshop" has received more sophisticated treatment in recent sociological writings on delinquency. David Matza and Gresham M. Sykes, for example, suggest that delinquents have the values of a leisure class, the same values ascribed by Veblen to *the* leisure class: a search for kicks, disdain of work, a desire for the big score, and acceptance of aggressive toughness as proof of masculinity. Matza and Sykes explain delinquency by reference to this system of values, but they note that adolescents at all class levels are "to some extent" members of a leisure class, that they "move in a limbo between earlier parental domination and future integration with the social structure through the bonds of work and marriage." In the end, then, the leisure of the adolescent produces a set of values, which, in turn, leads to delinquency.

Belief

Unlike the cultural deviance theory, the control theory assumes the existence of a common value system within the society or group whose norms are being violated. If the deviant is committed to a value system different from that of conventional society, there is, within the context of the theory, nothing to explain. The question is, "Why does a man

violate the rules in which he believes?" It is not, "Why do men differ in their beliefs about what constitutes good and desirable conduct?" The person is assumed to have been socialized (perhaps imperfectly) into the group whose rules he is violating; deviance is not a question of one group imposing its rules on the members of another group. In other words, we not only assume the deviant *has* believed the rules, we assume he believes the rules even as he violates them.

How can a person believe it is wrong to steal at the same time he is stealing? In the strain theory, this is not a difficult problem. (In fact, ... the strain theory was devised specifically to deal with this question.) The motivation to deviance adduced by the strain theorist is so strong that we can well understand the deviant act even assuming the deviator believes strongly that it is wrong. However, given the control theory's assumptions about motivation, if both the deviant and the nondeviant believe the deviant act is wrong, how do we account for the fact that one commits it and the other does not?

Control theories have taken two approaches to this problem. In one approach, beliefs are treated as mere words that mean little or nothing if the other forms of control are missing. "Semantic dementia," the dissociation between rational faculties and emotional control which is said to be characteristic of the psychopath, illustrates this way of handling the problem. In short, beliefs, at least insofar as they are expressed in words, drop out of the picture; since they do not differentiate between deviants and nondeviants, they are in the same class as "language" or any other characteristic common to all members of the group. Since they represent no real obstacle to the commission of delinquent acts, nothing need be said about how they are handled by those committing such acts. The control theories that do not mention beliefs (or values), and many do not, may be assumed to take this approach to the problem.

The second approach argues that the deviant rationalizes his behavior so that he can at once violate the rule and maintain his belief in it. Donald R. Cressey has advanced this argument with respect to embezzlement, and Sykes and Matza have advanced it with respect to delinquency. In both Cressey's and Sykes and Matza's treatments, these rationalizations (Cressey calls them "verbalizations," Sykes and Matza term them "techniques of neutralization") occur prior to the commission of the deviant act. If the neutralization is successful, the person is free to commit the act(s) in question. Both in Cressey and in Sykes and Matza, the strain that prompts the effort at neutralization also provides the motive force that results in the subsequent deviant act. Their theories are thus, in this sense, strain theories. Neutralization is difficult to handle within the context of a theory that adheres closely to control theory assumptions, because in the control theory there is no special motivational force to account for the neutralization. This difficulty is especially noticeable in Matza's later treatment of this topic, where the motivational component, the "will to delinquency" appears *after* the moral vacuum has been created by the techniques of the neutralization. The question thus becomes: Why neutralize?

In attempting to solve a strain theory problem with control theory tools, the control theorist is thus led into a trap. He cannot answer the crucial question. The concept of neutralization assumes the existence of moral obstacles to the commission of deviant acts. In order plausibly to account for a deviant act, it is necessary to generate motivation to deviance that is at least equivalent in force to the resistance provided by these moral obstacles. However, if the moral obstacles are removed, neutralization and special motivation are no longer required. We therefore follow the implicit logic of control theory and remove these moral obstacles by hypothesis. Many persons do not have an attitude of respect toward the rules of society; many persons feel no moral obligation to conform regardless of personal advantage. Insofar as the values and beliefs of these persons are consistent with their feelings, and there should be a tendency toward consistency, neutralization is unnecessary; it has already occurred.

Does this merely push the question back a step and at the same time produce conflict with the assumption of a common value system? I think not. In the first place, we do not assume, as does Cressey, that neutralization occurs in

order to make a specific criminal act possible. We do not assume, as do Sykes and Matza, that neutralization occurs to make many delinquent acts possible. We do not assume, in other words, that the person constructs a system of rationalizations in order to justify commission of acts he *wants* to commit. We assume, in contrast, that the beliefs that free a man to commit deviant acts are *unmotivated* in the sense that he does not construct or adopt them in order to facilitate the attainment of illicit ends. In the second place, we do not assume, as does Matza, that "delinquents concur in the conventional assessment of delinquency." We assume, in contrast, that there is *variation* in the extent to which people believe they should obey the rules of society, and, furthermore, that the less a person believes he should obey the rules, the more likely he is to violate them.

In chronological order, then, a person's beliefs in the moral validity of norms are, for no teleological reason, weakened. The probability that he will commit delinquent acts is therefore increased. When and if he commits a delinquent act, we may justifiably use the weakness of his beliefs in explaining it, but no special motivation is required to explain either the weakness of his beliefs or, perhaps, his delinquent act.

The keystone of this argument is of course the assumption that there is variation in belief in the moral validity of social rules. This assumption is amenable to direct empirical test and can thus survive at least until its first confrontation with data. For the present, we must return to the idea of a common value system with which this section was begun.

The idea of a common (or, perhaps better, a single) value system is consistent with the fact, or presumption, of variation in the strength of moral beliefs. We have not suggested that delinquency is based on beliefs counter to conventional morality; we have not suggested that delinquents do not believe delinquent acts are wrong, but the meaning and efficacy of such beliefs are contingent upon other beliefs and, indeed, on the strength of other ties to the conventional order.

Where Is the Motivation?

The most disconcerting question the control theorist faces goes something like this: "Yes, but *why* do they do it?" In the good old days, the control theorist could simply strip away the "veneer of civilization" and expose man's "animal impulses" for all to see. These impulses appeared to him (and apparently to his audience) to provide a plausible account of the motivation to crime and delinquency. His argument was *not* that delinquents and criminals alone are animals, but that we are all animals, and thus all naturally capable of committing criminal acts. It took no great study to reveal that children, chickens, and dogs occasionally assault and steal from their fellow creatures; that children, chickens, and dogs also behave for relatively long periods in a perfectly moral manner. Of course the acts of chickens and dogs are not "assault" or "theft," and such behavior is not "moral"; it is simply the behavior of a chicken or a dog. The chicken stealing corn from his neighbor knows nothing of the moral law; he does not *want* to violate rules; he wants merely to eat corn. The dog maliciously destroying a pillow or feloniously assaulting another dog is the moral equal of the chicken. No motivation to deviance is required to explain his acts. So, too, no special motivation to crime within the human animal was required to explain his criminal acts.

Times changed. It was no longer fashionable (within sociology, at least) to refer to animal impulses. The control theorist tended more and more to deemphasize the motivational component of his theory. He might refer in the beginning to "universal human needs," or some such, but the driving force behind crime and delinquency was rarely alluded to. At the same time, his explanations of crime and delinquency left the reader uneasy. What, the reader asked, is the control theorist assuming? Albert K. Cohen and James F. Short answer the question this way:

> ... it is important to point out one important limitation of both types of theory. They [culture conflict and social disorganization theories] are both *control* theories in the sense that they explain delinquency in terms of the *absence* of effective controls. They appear, therefore, to imply a model of motivation that assumes that the impulse to delinquency is an inherent characteristic of young people and does not itself need to be explained; it is something that erupts when the lid—i.e., internalized cultural restraints or external authority—is off.

There are several possible and I think reasonable reactions to this criticism. One reaction is simply to acknowledge the assumption, to grant that one is assuming what control theorists have always assumed about the motivation to crime—that it is constant across persons (at least within the system in question):

> There is no reason to assume that only those who finally commit a deviant act usually have the impulse to do so. It is much more likely that most people experience deviant impulses frequently. At least in fantasy, people are much more deviant than they appear.

There is certainly nothing wrong with *making* such an assumption. We are free to assume anything we wish to assume; the truth of our theory is presumably subject to empirical test.

A second reaction, involving perhaps something of a quibble, is to defend the logic of control theory and to deny the alleged assumption. We can say the fact that control theory suggests the absence of something causes delinquency is not a proper criticism, since negative relations have as much claim to scientific acceptability as do positive relations. We can also say that the present theory does not impute an inherent impulse to *delinquency* to anyone. That, on the contrary, it denies the necessity of such an imputation:

> The desires, and other passions of man, are in themselves no sin. No more are the actions, that proceed from those passions, till they know a law that forbids them.

A third reaction is to accept the criticism as valid, to grant that a complete explanation of delinquency would provide the necessary impetus, and proceed to construct an explanation of motivation consistent with control theory. Briar and Piliavin provide situational motivation:

> We assume these acts are prompted by short-term situationally induced desires experienced by all boys to obtain valued goods, to portray courage in the presence of, or be loyal to peers, to strike out at someone who is disliked, or simply to "get kicks."

... There are several additional accounts of "why they do it" that are to my mind persuasive and at the same time generally compatible with control theory. But while all of these accounts may be compatible with control theory, they are by no means deducible from it. Furthermore, they rarely impute built-in, unusual motivation to the delinquent: he is attempting to satisfy the same desires, he is reacting to the same pressures as other boys (as is clear, for example, in the previous quotation from Briar and Piliavin). In other words, if included, these accounts of motivation would serve the same function in the theory that "animal impulses" traditionally served: they might add to its persuasiveness and plausibility, but they would add little else, since they do not differentiate delinquents from nondelinquents.

In the end, then, control theory remains what it has always been: a theory in which deviation is not problematic. The question "Why do they do it?" is simply not the question the theory is designed to answer. The question is, "Why don't we do it?" There is much evidence that we would if we dared.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Hirschi say that the key question for criminologists to answer is "Why don't they do it?" as opposed to "Why do they do it?"
2. How does control theory differ from strain theory and cultural deviance (i.e., differential association) theory?
3. What are the four elements of the social bond? How does each one help to control a youth from engaging in delinquency?
4. What factors in American society might cause social bonds to be weaker in inner-city neighborhoods?

17.

A General Theory of Crime*

Michael R. Gottfredson

Travis Hirschi

Traditional sociological theories placed their primary focus on the social experiences of youths outside the family. For differential association theory, for example, most attention has been given to the role of peer groups in fostering delinquency; for strain theory, the lack of opportunities in school and in the labor market is considered as the source of crime-inducing frustration. In contrast, Gottfredson and Hirschi have redirected the attention of criminologists to the family and to what parents do, or do not do, during childhood.

In his social bond theory, Hirschi emphasized the importance of "indirect control"—how close attachment to parents allows the parents to have a "psychological presence" when youths are not under their surveillance. Gottfredson and Hirschi, however, argue that "direct control" is the key to effective parenting (see Wells and Rankin, 1988). Unless parents monitor their children closely and then take steps to punish misbehavior when it occurs—that is, unless they teach children that breaking rules has consequences—self-control will not be instilled. Instead, the child "will tend to be impulsive, insensitive, physical (as opposed to mental), risk-taking, short-sighted, and nonverbal" (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990 : 90). As they endlessly succumb to life's temporary temptations, children burdened with low self-control will constantly engage in crime and other forms of deviance. They also will lack the persistence needed to succeed in school, in the workplace, and in social relationships. In short, they will be consigned to a wayward life replete with brushes with the law and with personal and social failure.

We should note that Gottfredson and Hirschi differentiate between "criminality," which is the propensity to offend, and "crime," which is an actual event in which a law is broken. They recognize that a propensity cannot be acted on unless the opportunity to do so exists. As a result, they see crime as a byproduct of people with low self-control, who have high criminogenic propensities, coming into contact with illegal opportunities. Still, given that most offenses are easy to commit, and opportunities for crime are constantly available, over time people with low self-control inevitably will become deeply involved in criminal behavior. That is, self-control, not opportunities, will be the primary determinant of people's involvement in crime across their life course.

Similar to social bond theory, the core premise of Gottfredson and Hirschi's theory is easily identified and thus amenable to testing: the lower a person's self-control, the higher his or her involvement in criminal behavior and in acts analogous to crime. Not surprisingly, a growing body of research assessing self-control theory soon arose, including an important study on how best to measure the construct (see Grasmick et al., 1993). In the three decades following, there has been consistent support for Gottfredson and Hirschi's core thesis, including across nations—a fact that ensures that their self-control theory will remain an important theoretical perspective (Gottfredson, 2006; Hay and Meldrum, 2016). Most notably, meta-analyses of the extant literature at different points in time have confirmed that low self-control is a robust correlate of crime and other deviant outcomes (see Pratt and Cullen, 2000; Vazsonyi et al., 2017).

The limits of self-control theory, however, should also be mentioned (see Goode, 2008). Thus, in empirical tests, low self-control cannot, as Gottfredson and Hirschi predict, explain away the effects on crime of other sociological factors, especially the effects of differential association/social learning variables (see, e.g., Evans et al., 1997; Pratt and Cullen, 2000; Unnever et al., 2006). The stability of self-control is also at issue. Contrary to Gottfredson and Hirschi's view, for example, research shows that intervention programs can improve self-control, suggesting that such regulation is malleable rather than fixed in childhood (Na and Paternoster, 2012; Piquero et al., 2010). Situational contingencies—such as the presence of emotions, illicit substances, external threat, fatigue, or the time available to make a decision—can create fluctuations in manifestations of self-control (Burt, 2020). Perhaps most consequential, Gottfredson and Hirschi commit what Currie (1985: 185) calls the "fallacy of autonomy—the belief that what goes on inside the family can usefully be separated from the forces that affect it from the outside: the larger social context in which families are embedded for better or for worse." Thus, despite emphasizing the salience of parenting in crime causation, Gottfredson and Hirschi remain largely silent on the social forces that are transforming the American family and challenging the ability of parents to raise their children effectively.

References

Burt, Callie H. 2020. "Self-Control and Crime: Beyond Gottfredson & Hirschi's Theory." *Annual Review of Criminology* **3**: 43–73.

Currie, Elliott. 1985. *Confronting Crime: An American Challenge*. New York: Pantheon.

Evans, T. David, Francis T. Cullen, Velmer S. Burton, Jr., R. Gregory Dunaway, and Michael L. Benson. 1997. "The Social Consequences of Self-Control: Testing the General Theory of Crime." *Criminology* **35**: 475–504.

Goode, Erich, ed. 2008. *Out of Control: Assessing the General Theory of Crime*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Gottfredson, Michael R. 2006. "The Empirical Status of Control Theory in Criminology." In Francis T. Cullen, John Paul Wright, and Kristie R. Blevins (eds.), *Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **15**, pp. 77–100. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Gottfredson, Michael R. and Travis Hirschi. 1990. *A General Theory of Crime*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Grasmick, Harold G., Charles R. Tittle, Robert J. Bursik, Jr., and Bruce K. Arneklev. 1993. "Testing the Core Empirical Implications of Gottfredson and Hirschi's General Theory of Crime." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **30**: 5–29.

Hay, Carter and Ryan Meldrum. 2016. *Self-Control and Crime over the Life Course*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Na, Chongmin and Raymond Paternoster. 2012. "Can Self-Control Change Substantially Over Time? Rethinking the Relationship Between Self- and Social Control." *Criminology* **50**: 427–462.

Piquero, Alex R., Wesley G. Jennings, and David P. Farrington. 2010. "On the Malleability of Self-Control: Theoretical and Policy Implications Regarding a General Theory of Crime." *Justice Quarterly* **27**: 803–834.

Pratt, Travis C. and Francis T. Cullen. 2000. "The Empirical Status of Gottfredson and Hirschi's General Theory of Crime: A Meta-Analysis." *Criminology* **38**: 931–964.

Unnever, James D., Francis T. Cullen, and Robert Agnew. 2006. "Why Is 'Bad' Parenting Criminogenic? Implications from Rival Theories." *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* **4**: 3–33.

Vazsonyi, Alexander T., Jakub Mikuška, and Erin L. Kelley. 2017. "It's Time: A Meta-Analysis on the Self-Control–Deviance Link." *Journal of Criminal Justice* **48**: 48–63.

Wells, L. Edward and Joseph H. Rankin. 1988. “Direct Parental Controls and Delinquency.” *Criminology* **26**: 263–285.

Theories of crime lead naturally to interest in the propensities of individuals committing criminal acts. These propensities are often labeled “criminality.” In pure classical theory, people committing criminal acts had no special propensities. They merely followed the universal tendency to enhance their own pleasure. If they differed from noncriminals, it was with respect to their location in or comprehension of relevant sanction systems. For example, the individual cut off from the community will suffer less than others from the ostracism that follows crime; the individual unaware of the natural or legal consequences of criminal behavior cannot be controlled by these consequences to the degree that people aware of them are controlled; the atheist will not be as concerned as the believer about penalties to be exacted in a life beyond death. Classical theories on the whole, then, are today called *control theories,* theories emphasizing the prevention of crime through consequences painful to the individual.

Although, for policy purposes, classical theorists emphasized legal consequences, the importance to them of moral sanctions is so obvious that their theories might well be called underdeveloped *social control* theories. In fact, Bentham’s list of the major restraining motives—motives acting to prevent mischievous acts—begins with goodwill, love of reputation, and the desire for amity (1970: 134–36). He goes on to say that fear of detection prevents crime in large part because of detection’s consequences for “reputation, and the desire for amity” (p. 138). Put another way, in Bentham’s view, the restraining power of legal sanctions in large part stems from their connection to social sanctions.

If crime is evidence of the weakness of social motives, it follows that criminals are less social than noncriminals and that the extent of their asociality may be determined by the nature and number of their crimes. Calculation of the extent of an individual’s mischievousness is a complex affair, but in general the more mischievous or depraved the offenses, and the greater their number, the more mischievous or depraved the offender (Bentham 1970: 134–42). (Classical theorists thus had reason to be interested in the seriousness of the offense. The relevance of seriousness to current theories of crime is not so clear.)

Because classical or control theories infer that offenders are not restrained by social motives, it is common to think of them as emphasizing an asocial human nature. Actually, such theories make people only as asocial as their acts require. Pure or consistent control theories do not add criminality (i.e., personality concepts or attributes such as “aggressiveness” or “extraversion”) to individuals beyond that found in their criminal acts. As a result, control theories are suspicious of images of an antisocial, psychopathic, or career offender, or of an offender whose motives to crime are somehow larger than those given in the crimes themselves. Indeed, control theories are compatible with the view that the balance of the total control structure favors conformity, even among offenders:

> For in every man, be his disposition ever so depraved, the social motives are those which … regulate and determine the general tenor of his life…. The general and standing bias of every man’s nature is, therefore, towards that side to which the force of the social motives would determine him to adhere. This being the case, the force of the social motives tends continually to put an end to that of the dissocial ones; as, in natural bodies, the force of friction tends to put an end to that which is generated by impulse. Time, then, which wears away the force of the dissocial motives, adds to that of the social. (Bentham 1970: 141)

Positivism brought with it the idea that criminals differ from noncriminals in ways more radical than this, the idea that criminals carry within themselves properties peculiarly and positively conducive to crime. [Previously], we examined the efforts of the major disciplines to identify these properties. Being friendly to both the classical and positivist traditions, we expected to end up with a list of individual properties reliably identified by competent research as useful in the description of “criminality”—such properties as aggressiveness, body build, activity level, and intelligence. We further expected that we would be able to connect these individual-level correlates of criminality directly to the classical idea of crime. As our review progressed, however, we were forced to conclude that we had

overestimated the success of positivism in establishing important differences between "criminals" and "noncriminals" beyond their tendency to commit criminal acts. Stable individual differences in the tendency to commit criminal acts were clearly evident, but many or even most of the other differences between offenders and nonoffenders were not as clear or pronounced as our reading of the literature had led us to expect.

If individual differences in the tendency to commit criminal acts (within an overall tendency for crime to decline with age) are at least potentially explicable within classical theory by reference to the social location of individuals and their comprehension of how the world works, the fact remains that classical theory cannot shed much light on the positivistic finding (denied by most positivistic theories....) that these differences *remain reasonably stable with change in the social location of individuals and change in their knowledge of the operation of sanction systems*. This is the problem of self-control, the differential tendency of people to avoid criminal acts whatever the circumstances in which they find themselves. Since this difference among people has attracted a variety of names, we begin by arguing the merits of the concept of self-control.

---

* Reprinted from *A General Theory of Crime* by Michael R. Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi. Copyright © 1990 by the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University. All rights reserved. With the permission of Stanford University Press, www.sup.org.

Self-Control and Alternative Concepts

Our decision to ascribe stable individual differences in criminal behavior to self-control was made only after considering several alternatives, one of which (criminality) we had used before (Hirschi and Gottfredson 1986). A major consideration was consistency between the classical conception of crime and our conception of the criminal. It seemed unwise to try to integrate a choice theory of crime with a deterministic image of the offender, especially when such integration was unnecessary. In fact, the compatibility of the classical view of crime and the idea that people differ in self-control is, in our view, remarkable. As we have seen, classical theory is a theory of social or external control, a theory based on the idea that the costs of crime depend on the individual's current location in or bond to society. What classical theory lacks is an explicit idea of self-control, the idea that people also differ in the extent to which they are vulnerable to the temptations of the moment. Combining the two ideas thus merely recognizes the simultaneous existence of social and individual restraints on behavior.

An obvious alternative is the concept of criminality. The disadvantages of that concept, however, are numerous. First, it connotes causation or determinism, a positive tendency to crime that is contrary to the classical model and, in our view, contrary to the facts. Whereas self-control suggests that people differ in the extent to which they are restrained from criminal acts, criminality suggests that people differ in the extent to which they are compelled to crime. The concept of self-control is thus consistent with the observation that criminals do not require or need crime, and the concept of criminality is inconsistent with this observation. By the same token, the idea of low self-control is compatible with the observation that criminal acts require no special capabilities, needs, or motivation; they are, in this sense, available to everyone. In contrast, the idea of criminality as a special tendency suggests that criminal acts require special people for their performance and enjoyment. Finally, lack of restraint or low self-control allows almost any deviant, criminal, exciting, or dangerous act; in contrast, the idea of criminality covers only a narrow portion of the apparently diverse acts engaged in by people at one end of the dimension we are now discussing.

The concept of conscience comes closer than criminality to self-control, and is harder to distinguish from it. Unfortunately, that concept has connotations of compulsion (to conformity) not, strictly speaking, consistent with a choice model (or with the operation of conscience). It does not seem to cover the behaviors analogous to crime that appear to be controlled by natural sanctions rather than social or moral sanctions, and in the end it typically refers to how people feel about their acts rather than to the likelihood that they will or will not commit them. Thus accidents and employment instability are not usually seen as produced by failures of conscience, and writers in the conscience tradition do not typically make the connection between moral and prudent behavior. Finally, conscience is used primarily to summarize the results of learning via negative reinforcement, and even those favorably disposed to its use leave little more to say about it (see, e.g., Eysenck 1977; Wilson and Herrnstein 1985).

We are now in position to describe the nature of self-control, the individual characteristic relevant to the commission of criminal acts. We assume that the nature of this characteristic can be derived directly from the nature of criminal acts. We thus infer from the nature of crime what people who refrain from criminal acts are like before they reach the age at which crime becomes a logical possibility. We then work back further to the factors producing their restraint, back to the causes of self-control. In our view, lack of self-control does not require crime and can be counteracted by situational conditions or other properties of the individual. At the same time, we suggest that high self-control effectively reduces the possibility of crime—that is, those possessing it will be substantially less likely at all periods of life to engage in criminal acts.

The Elements of Self-Control

Criminal acts provide *immediate* gratification of desires. A major characteristic of people with low self-control is therefore a tendency to respond to tangible stimuli in the immediate environment, to have a concrete "here and now" orientation. People with high self-control, in contrast, tend to defer gratification.

Criminal acts provide easy or simple gratification of desires. They provide money without work, sex without courtship, revenge without court delays. People lacking self-control also tend to lack diligence, tenacity, or persistence in a course of action.

Criminal acts are *exciting, risky, or thrilling*. They involve stealth, danger, speed, agility, deception, or power. People lacking self-control therefore tend to be adventuresome, active, and physical. Those with high levels of self-control tend to be cautious, cognitive, and verbal.

Crimes provide *few or meager long-term benefits*. They are not equivalent to a job or a career. On the contrary, crimes interfere with long-term commitments to jobs, marriages, family, or friends. People with low self-control thus tend to have unstable marriages, friendships, and job profiles. They tend to be little interested in and unprepared for long-term occupation pursuits.

Crimes require *little skill or planning*. The cognitive requirements for most crimes are minimal. It follows that people lacking self-control need not possess or value cognitive or academic skills. The manual skills required for most crimes are minimal. It follows that people lacking self-control need not possess manual skills that require training or apprenticeship.

Crimes often result in *pain or discomfort for the victim*. Property is lost, bodies are injured, privacy is violated, trust is broken. It follows that people with low self-control tend to be self-centered, indifferent, or insensitive to the suffering and needs of others. It does not follow, however, that people with low self-control are routinely unkind or antisocial. On the contrary, they may discover the immediate and easy rewards of charm and generosity.

Recall that crime involves the pursuit of immediate pleasure. It follows that people lacking self-control will also tend to pursue immediate pleasures that are *not* criminal: They will tend to smoke, drink, use drugs, gamble, have children out of wedlock, and engage in illicit sex.

Crimes require the interaction of an offender with people or their property. It does not follow that people lacking self-control will tend to be gregarious or social. However, it does follow that, other things being equal, gregarious or social people are more likely to be involved in criminal acts.

The major benefit of many crimes is not pleasure but relief from momentary irritation. The irritation caused by a crying child is often the stimulus for physical abuse. That caused by a taunting stranger in a bar is often the stimulus for aggravated assault. It follows that people with low self-control tend to have minimal tolerance for frustration and little ability to respond to conflict through verbal rather than physical means.

Crimes involve the risk of violence and physical injury, of pain and suffering on the part of the offender. It does not follow that people with low self-control will tend to be tolerant of physical pain or to be indifferent to physical discomfort. It does follow that people tolerant of physical pain or indifferent to physical discomfort will be more likely to engage in criminal acts whatever their level of self-control.

The risk of criminal penalty for any given criminal act is small, but this depends in part on the circumstances of the offense. Thus, for example, not all joyrides by teenagers are equally likely to result in arrest. A car stolen from a neighbor and returned unharmed before he notices its absence is less likely to result in official notice than is a car stolen from a shopping center parking lot and abandoned at the convenience of the offender. Drinking alcohol stolen from parents and consumed in the family garage is less likely to receive official notice than drinking in the parking lot outside a concert hall. It follows that offenses differ in their validity as measures of self-control: those offenses with large risk of public awareness are better measures than those with little risk.

In sum, people who lack self-control will tend to be impulsive, insensitive, physical (as opposed to mental), risk-taking, short sighted, and nonverbal, and they will tend therefore to engage in criminal and analogous acts. Since these traits can be identified prior to the age of responsibility for crime, since there is considerable tendency for these traits to come together in the same people, and since the traits tend to persist through life, it seems reasonable to consider them as comprising a stable construct useful in the explanation of crime.

The Many Manifestations of Low Self-Control

Our image of the "offender" suggests that crime is not an automatic or necessary consequence of low self-control. It suggests that many noncriminal acts analogous to crime (such as accidents, smoking, and alcohol use) are also manifestations of low self-control. Our image therefore implies that no specific act, type of crime, or form of deviance is uniquely required by the absence of self-control.

Because both crime and analogous behaviors stem from low self-control (that is, both are manifestations of low self-control), they will all be engaged in at a relatively high rate by people with low self-control. Within the domain of crime, then, there will be much versatility among offenders in the criminal acts in which they engage.

Research on the versatility of deviant acts supports these predictions in the strongest possible way. The variety of manifestations of low self-control is immense. In spite of years of tireless research motivated by a belief in specialization, no credible evidence of specialization has been reported. In fact, the evidence of offender versatility is overwhelming (Hirschi 1969; Hindelang 1971; Wolfgang, Figlio, and Sellin 1972; Petersilia 1980; Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weis 1981; Rojek and Erickson 1982; Klein 1984).

By versatility we mean that offenders commit a wide variety of criminal acts, with no strong inclination to pursue a specific criminal act or a pattern of criminal acts to the exclusion of others. Most theories suggest that offenders tend to specialize, whereby such terms as robber, burglar, drug dealer, rapist, and murderer have predictive or descriptive import. In fact, some theories create offender specialization as part of their explanation of crime. For example, Cloward and Ohlin (1960) create distinctive subcultures of delinquency around particular forms of criminal behavior, identifying subcultures specializing in theft, violence, or drugs. In a related way, books are written about white-collar crime as though it were a clearly distinct specialty requiring a unique explanation. Research projects are undertaken for the study of drug use, or vandalism, or teen pregnancy (as though every study of delinquency were not a study of drug use and vandalism and teenage sexual behavior). Entire schools of criminology emerge to pursue patterning, sequencing, progression, escalation, onset, persistence, and desistance in the career of offenses or offenders. These efforts survive largely because their proponents fail to consider or acknowledge the clear evidence to the contrary. Other reasons for survival of such ideas may be found in the interest of politicians and members of the law enforcement community who see policy potential in criminal careers or "career criminals" (see, e.g., Blumstein et al. 1986).

Occasional reports of specialization seem to contradict this point, as do everyday observations of repetitive misbehavior by particular offenders. Some offenders rob the same store repeatedly over a period of years, or an offender commits several rapes over a (brief) period of time. Such offenders may be called "robbers" or "rapists." However, it should be noted that such labels are retrospective rather than predictive and that they typically ignore a large amount of delinquent or criminal behavior by the same offenders that is inconsistent with their alleged specialty. Thus, for example, the "rapist" will tend also to use drugs, to commit robberies and burglaries (often in concert with the rape), and to have a record for violent offenses other than rape. There is a perhaps natural tendency on the part of observers (and in official accounts) to focus on the most serious crimes in a series of events, but this tendency should not be confused with a tendency on the part of the offender to specialize in one kind of crime.

Recall that one of the defining features of crime is that it is simple and easy. Some apparent specialization will therefore occur because obvious opportunities for an easy score will tend to repeat themselves. An offender who lives

next to a shopping area that is approached by pedestrians will have repeat opportunities for purse snatching, and this may show in his arrest record. But even here the specific "criminal career" will tend to quickly run its course and to be followed by offenses whose content and character is likewise determined by coincidence and opportunity (which is the reason why some form of theft is always the best bet about what a person is likely to do next).

The evidence that offenders are likely to engage in noncriminal acts psychologically or theoretically equivalent to crime is, because of the relatively high rates of these "noncriminal" acts, even easier to document. Thieves are likely to smoke, drink, and skip school at considerably higher rates than nonthieves. Offenders are considerably more likely than nonoffenders to be involved in most types of accidents, including household fires, auto crashes, and unwanted pregnancies. They are also considerably more likely to die at an early age (see, e.g., Robins 1966; Eysenck 1977; Gottfredson 1984).

Good research on drug use and abuse routinely reveals that the correlates of delinquency and drug use are the same. As Akers (1984) has noted,

> compared to the abstaining teenager, the drinking, smoking and drug-taking teen is much more likely to be getting into fights, stealing, hurting other people, and committing other delinquencies.

Akers goes on to say, "but the variation in the order in which they take up these things leaves little basis for proposing the causation of one by the other." In our view, the relation between drug use and delinquency is not a causal question. The correlates are the same because drug use and delinquency are both manifestations of an underlying tendency to pursue short-term, immediate pleasure. This underlying tendency (i.e., lack of self control) has many manifestations, as listed by Harrison Gough (1948):

> unconcern over the rights and privileges of others when recognizing them would interfere with personal satisfaction in any way; impulsive behavior, or apparent incongruity between the strength of the stimulus and the magnitude of the behavioral response; inability to form deep or persistent attachments to other persons or to identify in interpersonal relationships; poor judgment and planning in attaining defined goals; apparent lack of anxiety and distress over social maladjustment and unwillingness or inability to consider maladjustment qua maladjustment; a tendency to project blame onto others and to take no responsibility for failures; meaningless prevarication, often about trivial matters in situations where detection is inevitable; almost complete lack of dependability … and willingness to assume responsibility; and, finally, emotional poverty. [p. 362]

This combination of characteristics has been revealed in the life histories of the subjects in the famous studies by Lee Robins. Robins is one of the few researchers to focus on the varieties of deviance and the way they tend to go together in the lives of those she designates as having "antisocial personalities." In her words:

> We refer to someone who fails to maintain close personal relationships with anyone else, [who] performs poorly on the job, who is involved in illegal behaviors (whether or not apprehended), who fails to support himself and his dependents without outside aid, and who is given to sudden changes of plan and loss of temper in response to what appear to others as minor frustrations. (1978: 255)

For 30 years Robins traced 524 children referred to a guidance clinic in St. Louis, Missouri, and she compared them to a control group matched on IQ, age, sex, and area of the city. She discovered that, in comparison to the control group, those people referred at an early age were more likely to be arrested as adults (for a wide variety of offences), were less likely to get married, were more likely to be divorced, were more likely to marry a spouse with a behavior problem, were less likely to have children (but if they had children were likely to have more children), were more likely to have children with behavior problems, were more likely to be unemployed, had considerably more frequent job changes, were more likely to be on welfare, had fewer contacts with relatives, had fewer friends, were substantially less likely to attend church, were less likely to serve in the armed forces and more likely to be dishonorably discharged if they did serve, were more likely to exhibit physical evidence of excessive alcohol use, and were more likely to be hospitalized for psychiatric problems (1966: 42–73).

Note that these outcomes are consistent with four general elements of our notion of low self-control: basic stability of individual differences over a long period of time; great variability in the kinds of criminal acts engaged in; conceptual or causal equivalence of criminal and noncriminal acts; and inability to predict the specific forms of deviance engaged in, whether criminal or noncriminal. In our view, the idea of an antisocial personality defined by certain behavioral consequences is too positivistic or deterministic, suggesting that the offender must do certain things given his antisocial personality. Thus we would say only that the subjects in question are *more likely* to commit criminal acts (as the data indicate they are). We do not make commission of criminal acts part of the definition of the individual with low self-control.

Be this as it may, Robins's retrospective research shows that predictions derived from a concept of antisocial personality are highly consistent with the results of prospective longitudinal and cross-sectional research: offenders do not specialize; they tend to be involved in accidents, illness, and death at higher rates than the general population; they tend to have difficulty persisting in a job regardless of the particular characteristics of the job (no job will turn out to be a good job); they have difficulty acquiring and retaining friends; and they have difficulty meeting the demands of long-term financial commitments (such as mortgages or car payments) and the demands of parenting.

Seen in this light, the "costs" of low self-control for the individual may far exceed the costs of his criminal acts. In fact, it appears that crime is often among the least serious consequences of a lack of self-control in terms of the quality of life of those lacking it.

The Causes of Self-Control

We know better what deficiencies in self-control lead to than where they come from. One thing is, however, clear: low self-control is not produced by training, tutelage, or socialization. As a matter of fact, all of the characteristics associated with low self-control tend to show themselves in the absence of nurturance, discipline, or training. Given the classical appreciation of the causes of human behavior, the implications of this fact are straightforward: the causes of low self-control are negative rather than positive; self-control is unlikely in the absence of effort, intended or unintended, to create it. (This assumption separates the present theory from most modern theories of crime, where the offender is automatically seen as a product of possessive forces, a creature of learning, particular pressures, or specific defect. We will return to this comparison once our theory has been fully explicated.)

At this point it would be easy to construct a theory of crime causation, according to which characteristics of potential offenders lead them ineluctably to the commission of criminal acts. Our task at this point would simply be to identify the likely sources of impulsiveness, intelligence, risk-taking, and the like. But to do so would be to follow the path that has proven so unproductive in the past, the path according to which criminals commit crimes irrespective of the characteristics of the setting or situation.

We can avoid this pitfall by recalling the elements inherent in the decision to commit a criminal act. The object of the offense is clearly pleasurable, and universally so. Engaging in the act, however, entails some risk of social, legal, and/or natural sanctions. Whereas the pleasure attained by the act is direct, obvious, and immediate, the pains risked by it are not obvious, or direct, and are in any event at greater remove from it. It follows that, though there will be little variability among people in their ability to see the pleasures of crime, there will be considerable variability in their ability to calculate potential pains. But the problem goes further than this: whereas the pleasures of crime are reasonably equally distributed over the population, this is not true for the pains. Everyone appreciates money; not everyone dreads parental anger or disappointment upon learning that the money was stolen.

So, the dimensions of self-control are, in our view, factors affecting calculation of the consequences of one's acts. The impulsive or short-sighted person fails to consider the negative or painful consequences of his acts; the insensitive person has fewer negative consequences to consider; the less intelligent person also has fewer negative consequences to consider (has less to lose).

No known social group, whether criminal or noncriminal, actively or purposefully attempts to reduce the self-control of its members. Social life is not enhanced by low self-control and its consequences. On the contrary, the exhibition of these tendencies undermines harmonious group relations and the ability to achieve collective ends. These facts explicitly deny that a tendency to crime is a product of socialization, culture, or positive learning of any sort.

The traits composing low self-control are also not conducive to the achievement of long-term individual goals. On the contrary, they impede educational and occupational achievement, destroy interpersonal relations, and undermine physical health and economic well-being. Such facts explicitly deny the notion that criminality is an alternative route to the goals otherwise obtainable through legitimate avenues. It follows that people who care about the interpersonal skill, educational and occupational achievement, and physical and economic well-being of those in their care will seek to rid them of these traits.

Two general sources of variation are immediately apparent in this scheme. The first is the variation among children in the degree to which they manifest such traits to begin with. The second is the variation among caretakers in the

degree to which they recognize low self-control and its consequences and the degree to which they are willing and able to correct it. Obviously, therefore, even at this threshold level the sources of low self-control are complex.

There is good evidence that some of the traits predicting subsequent involvement in crime appear as early as they can be reliably measured, including low intelligence, high activity level, physical strength, and adventuresomeness (Glueck and Glueck 1950; West and Farrington 1973). The evidence suggests that the connection between these traits and commission of criminal acts ranges from weak to moderate. Obviously, we do not suggest that people are born criminals, inherit a gene for criminality, or anything of the sort. In fact, we explicitly deny such notions.... What we do suggest is that individual differences may have an impact on the prospects for effective socialization (or adequate control). Effective socialization is, however, always possible whatever the configuration of individual traits.

Other traits affecting crime appear later and seem to be largely products of ineffective or incomplete socialization. For example, differences in impulsivity and insensitivity become noticeable later in childhood when they are no longer common to all children. The ability and willingness to delay immediate gratification for some larger purpose may therefore be assumed to be a consequence of training. Much parental action is in fact geared toward suppression of impulsive behavior, toward making the child consider the long-range consequences of acts. Consistent sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others may also be assumed to be a consequence of training. Indeed, much parental behavior is directed toward teaching the child about the rights and feelings of others, and of how these rights and feelings ought to constrain the child's behavior. All of these points focus our attention on child-rearing.

Child-Rearing and Self-Control: The Family

The major "cause" of low self-control thus appears to be ineffective child-rearing. Put in positive terms, several conditions appear necessary to produce a socialized child. Perhaps the place to begin looking for these conditions is the research literature on the relation between family conditions and delinquency. This research (e.g., Glueck and Glueck 1950; McCord and McCord 1959) has examined the connection between many family factors and delinquency. It reports that discipline, supervision, and affection tend to be missing in the homes of delinquents, that the behavior of the parents is often "poor" (e.g., excessive drinking and poor supervision [Glueck and Glueck 1950: 110–11]), and that the parents of delinquents are unusually likely to have criminal records themselves. Indeed, according to Michael Rutter and Henri Giller, "of the parental characteristics associated with delinquency, criminality is the most striking and most consistent" (1984: 182).

Such information undermines the many explanations of crime that ignore the family, but in this form it does not represent much of an advance over the belief of the general public (and those who deal with offenders in the criminal justice system) that "defective upbringing" or "neglect" in the home is the primary cause of crime.

To put these standard research findings in perspective, we think it necessary to define the conditions necessary for adequate child-rearing to occur. The minimum conditions seem to be these: in order to teach the child self-control, someone must (1) monitor the child's behavior; (2) recognize deviant behavior when it occurs; and (3) punish such behavior. This seems simple and obvious enough. All that is required to activate the system is affection for *or* investment in the child. The person who cares for the child will watch his behavior, see him doing things he should not do, and correct him. The result may be a child more capable of delaying gratification, more sensitive to the interests and desires of others, more independent, more willing to accept restraints on his activity, and more unlikely to use force or violence to attain his ends.

When we seek the causes of low self-control, we ask where this system can go wrong. Obviously, parents do not prefer their children to be unsocialized in the terms described. We can therefore rule out in advance the possibility of positive socialization to unsocialized behavior (as cultural or subcultural deviance theories suggest). Still, the system can go wrong at any one of four places. First, the parents may not care for the child (in which case none of the other conditions would be met); second, the parents, even if they care, may not have the time or energy to monitor the child's behavior; third, the parents, even if they care *and* monitor, may not see anything wrong with the child's behavior; finally, even if everything else is in place, the parents may not have the inclination or the means to punish the child. So, what may appear at first glance to be nonproblematic turns out to be problematic indeed. Many things can go wrong. According to much research in crime and delinquency, in the homes of problem children many things have gone wrong: "Parents of stealers do not track ([they] do not interpret stealing … as 'deviant'); they do not punish; and they do not care" (Patterson 1980: 88–89; see also Glueck and Glueck 1950; McCord and McCord 1959; West and Farrington 1977).

Let us apply this scheme to some of the facts about the connection between child socialization and crime, beginning with the elements of the child-rearing model.

The Attachment of the Parent to the Child

Our model states that parental concern for the welfare or behavior of the child is a necessary condition for successful child-rearing. Because it is too often assumed that all parents are alike in their love for their children, the evidence directly on this point is not as good or extensive as it could be. However, what exists is clearly consistent with the model. Glueck and Glueck (1950: 125–28) report that, compared to the fathers of delinquents, fathers of nondelinquents were twice as likely to be warmly disposed toward their sons and one-fifth as likely to be hostile toward them. In the same sample, 28% of the mothers of delinquents were characterized as "indifferent or hostile" toward the child as compared to 4% of the mothers of nondelinquents. The evidence suggests that stepparents are especially unlikely to have feelings of affection toward their stepchildren (Burgess 1980), adding in contemporary society to the likelihood that children will be "reared" by people who do not especially care for them.

Parental Supervision

The connection between social control and self-control could not be more direct than in the case of parental supervision of the child. Such supervision presumably prevents criminal or analogous acts and at the same time trains the child to avoid them on his own. Consistent with this assumption, supervision tends to be a major predictor of delinquency, however supervision or delinquency is measured (Glueck and Glueck 1950; Hirschi 1969; West and Farrington 1977; Riley and Shaw 1985).

Our general theory in principle provides a method of separating supervision as external control from supervision as internal control. For one thing, offenses differ in the degree to which they can be prevented through monitoring; children at one age are monitored much more closely than children at other ages; girls are supervised more closely than boys. In some situations, monitoring is universal or nearly constant; in other situations monitoring for some offenses is virtually absent. In the present context, however, the concern is with the connection between supervision and self-control, a connection established by the stronger tendency of those poorly supervised when young to commit crimes as adults (McCord 1979).

Recognition of Deviant Behavior

In order for supervision to have an impact on self-control, the supervisor must perceive deviant behavior when it occurs. Remarkably, not all parents are adept at recognizing lack of self-control. Some parents allow the child to do pretty much as he pleases without interference. Extensive television-viewing is one modern example, as is the failure to require completion of homework, to prohibit smoking, to curtail the use of physical force, or to see to it that the child actually attends school. (As noted, truancy among second-graders presumably reflects on the adequacy of parental awareness of the child's misbehavior.) Again, the research is not as good as it should be, but evidence of "poor conduct standards" in the homes of delinquents is common.

Punishment of Deviant Acts

Control theories explicitly acknowledge the necessity of sanctions in preventing criminal behavior. They do not suggest that the major sanctions are legal or corporal. On the contrary, as we have seen, they suggest that disapproval by people one cares about is the most powerful of sanctions. Effective punishment by the parent or major caretaker therefore usually entails nothing more than explicit disapproval of unwanted behavior. The criticism

of control theories that dwells on their alleged cruelty is therefore simply misguided or ill informed (see, e.g., Currie 1985).

Not all caretakers punish effectively. In fact, some are too harsh and some are too lenient (Glueck and Glueck 1950; McCord and McCord 1959; West and Farrington 1977; see generally Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber 1986). Given our model, however, rewarding good behavior cannot compensate for failure to correct deviant behavior. (Recall that, in our view, deviant acts carry with them their own rewards....)

Given the consistency of the child-rearing model with our general theory and with the research literature, it should be possible to use it to explain other family correlates of criminal and otherwise deviant behavior.

Parental Criminality

Our theory focuses on the connection between the self-control of the parent and the subsequent self-control of the child. There is good reason to expect, and the data confirm, that people lacking self-control do not socialize their children well. According to Donald West and David Farrington, "the fact that delinquency is transmitted from one generation to the next is indisputable" (1977: 109; see also Robins 1966). Of course our theory does not allow transmission of criminality, genetic or otherwise. However, it does allow us to predict that some people are more likely than others to fail to socialize their children and that this will be a consequence of their own inadequate socialization. The extent of this connection between parent and child socialization is revealed by the fact that in the West and Farrington study fewer than 5% of the families accounted for almost half of the criminal convictions in the entire sample. (In our view, this finding is more important for the theory of crime, and for public policy, than the much better-known finding of Wolfgang and his colleagues [1972] that something like 6% of *individual* offenders account for about half of all criminal acts.) In order to achieve such concentration of crime in a small number of families, it is necessary that the parents and the brothers and sisters of offenders also be unusually likely to commit criminal acts.

Why should the children of offenders be unusually vulnerable to crime? Recall that our theory assumes that criminality is not something the parents have to work to produce; on the contrary, it assumes that criminality is something they have to work to avoid. Consistent with this view, parents with criminal records do *not* encourage crime in their children and are in fact as disapproving of it as parents with no record of criminal involvement (West and Farrington 1977). Of course, not wanting criminal behavior in one's children and being upset when it occurs do not necessarily imply that great effort has been expended to prevent it. If criminal behavior is oriented toward short-term rewards, and if child-rearing is oriented toward long-term rewards, there is little reason to expect parents themselves lacking self-control to be particularly adept at instilling self-control in their children.

Consistent with this expectation, research consistently indicates that the supervision of delinquents in families where parents have criminal records tends to be "lax," "inadequate," or "poor." Punishment in these families also tends to be easy, short-term, and insensitive—that is, yelling and screaming, slapping and hitting, with threats that are not carried out.

Such facts do not, however, completely account for the concentration of criminality among some families. A major reason for this failure is probably that the most subtle element of child-rearing is not included in the analysis. This is the element of *recognition* of deviant behavior. According to Gerald Patterson (1980), many parents do not even recognize *criminal* behavior in their children, let alone the minor forms of deviance whose punishment is necessary for effective child-rearing. For example, when children steal outside the home, some parents discount reports that they have done so on the grounds that the charges are unproved and cannot therefore be used to justify punishment.

By the same token, when children are suspended for misbehavior at school, some parents side with the child and blame the episode on prejudicial mistreatment by teachers. Obviously, parents who cannot see the misbehavior of their children are in no position to correct it, even if they are inclined to do so....

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is low self-control? What are its main elements?
2. Give examples of acts that are "analogous" to crime. Why do Gottfredson and Hirschi believe that low self-control explains both crime and these analogous acts?
3. How does Gottfredson and Hirschi's self-control theory differ from Hirschi's earlier social bond theory?
4. What is the main reason that people have low self-control? In turn, based on Gottfredson and Hirschi's theory, what would be the best way to try to reduce crime?

SECTION 2

RETHINKING CRIMINOLOGY

Francis T. Cullen
University of Cincinnati

Robert Agnew
Emory University

Pamela Wilcox
Pennsylvania State University

PART VI

LABELING THEORY: SOCIETAL REACTION AND THE CREATION OF CRIMINALS

Francis T. Cullen
University of Cincinnati

Robert Agnew
Emory University

Pamela Wilcox
Pennsylvania State University

Nearly all criminological theories use the *offender* as the starting point of their analysis. Vigorous debates subsequently ensue over whether the key cause of crime is found inside or outside the offender, and, in either case, there is the additional debate over which specific individual difference or which social experience trumps the others as the preeminent criminogenic factor. Still, these differences aside, there is consensus that the search for crime's etiology must begin by studying the people who break the law.

The distinctiveness of the "labeling" or "societal reaction" perspective, however, lies in its rejection of using the offender as the lynchpin of criminological analysis. Labeling theory proposes that we focus our attention not on the behavior of offenders but on the *behavior of those who label, react to, and otherwise seek to control offenders*. Labeling theory argues that it is these efforts at social control that ultimately trigger the processes that trap individuals in criminal careers. Labeling or societal reaction thus has ironic and unanticipated effects: it creates the very thing it is intended to stop—it produces a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Creating Criminals: Secondary Deviance

Many early criminologists recognized that placing people in prisons—or "houses of corruption," as Shaw (1966 [1930]) called them—could deepen involvement in crime. These insights on the effects of "labeling," however, were largely voiced in passing and were not integrated into the scholar's theory of criminal behavior. Frank Tannenbaum's (1938: 19–21) discussion of the "dramatization of evil" stands out as a noteworthy exception to this tendency to treat the effects of labeling as a subsidiary concern. For this reason, the roots of labeling theory are often traced to his work.

In *Crime and the Community*, Tannenbaum endorsed the view of the Chicago school that crime was not a manifestation of individual differences but learned as part of an "educational process" in the community. Youths were surrounded by criminal influences, including gangs and older offenders. Even so, a "decisive step in the

education of the criminal" is being arrested and having his or her delinquent status held up for public scrutiny—that is, having one's evil "dramatized" (1938: 71). In his most famous passage, Tannenbaum asserted that "the process of making the criminal, therefore, is a process of tagging, defining, identifying, segregating, describing, emphasizing, making conscious and self-conscious; it becomes a way of stimulating, suggesting, emphasizing, and evoking the very traits that are complained of" (p. 20).

In setting forth this thesis, Tannenbaum anticipated many of the key ideas elaborated by later labeling theorists. He noted, for example, that once arrested and labeled a criminal, a youth is forced "into companionship with other children similarly defined," the result of which is that the youth is exposed to criminal "mores" and "has a new set of experiences that lead directly to a criminal career" (p. 20). Youngsters also begin to think differently about themselves. "In this entirely new world," observed Tannenbaum, "he is made conscious of himself as a different human being than he was before his arrest. He becomes classified as a thief, perhaps, and the entire world about him has suddenly become a different place for him and will remain different for the rest of his life" (p. 19). In the end, by labeling a juvenile with the official status of a delinquent, "the person becomes the thing he is described as being" (p. 20). The best policy in dealing with juveniles is "a refusal to dramatize the evil. The less said about it the better" (p. 20).

The idea that reacting to wayward conduct only makes it worse was conceptualized even more clearly by Edwin Lemert. Writing in 1951, he introduced the concepts of "primary" and "secondary" deviance (see also Lemert, 1972; Rosenberg, 2010). For Lemert, primary deviations occur for a wide range of reasons, some individual and some situational. These deviations are seen by individuals as peripheral to their identity and to the conventional social roles they typically perform on a daily basis. The inconsistency of deviating but not seeing this conduct as a reflection on one's identity creates tension that is "rationalized or otherwise dealt with as functions of a socially accepted role" (Lemert, 1951: 75). One might drink a great deal but still see oneself as a college student, not a "drunk."

Secondary deviance occurs when the individual no longer dissociates from his or her deviation. Instead, the person's "life and identity are organized around the facts of deviance" (Lemert, 1972: 63). But what causes this qualitative shift from primary to secondary deviance? Lemert argued that the key factor prompting a person's life to coalesce around deviance is the "reactions of others." Typically, a gradual process unfolds in which a cycle of deviation and negative reactions from others is repeated and amplified. Continued deviations call forth increasingly stigmatizing reactions from others. In the course of this interaction, the person eventually accepts his or her "deviant social status" and makes "efforts at adjustment based on the associated role" (Lemert, 1951: 77). They see themselves as deviant and make life choices that are constrained by and reaffirm their deviant status. "When a person begins to employ his deviant behavior or a role based upon it as a means of defense, attack, or adjustment to the overt and covert problems created by the consequent societal reaction to him," stated Lemert (1951: 76), "his deviation is secondary."

Thus, Lemert and Tannenbaum both proposed that when wayward people experience stigmatizing societal reactions, their world is transformed into one in which their criminal (or deviant) status defines their social existence and self-conception. The result is a deepening, not a reduction, of their criminality. Neither Lemert's nor Tannenbaum's insights, however, gained the sustained attention of their contemporaries. It was not until the mid-1960s, with the writings of Howard Becker (1963), Kai Erikson (1966), John Kitsuse (1964), Edwin Schur (1969), and others, that an identifiable school of criminology emerged that self-consciously referred to itself as "labeling" or "societal reaction" theory. In fact, it was at this time that the earlier works of Lemert and Tannenbaum were resurrected and redefined as falling within the tradition of labeling theory.

The Rise and Fall of Labeling Theory

Extending the work of Lemert and Tannenbaum, a group of scholars in the 1960s and early 1970s argued that societal reaction, not the offender, should be the centerpiece of criminological analysis. They focused on three issues that, in one way or another, challenged the assumptions traditionally held in the discipline.

First, criminologists usually define crime as "behavior that violates a criminal law." For labeling theorists, however, this definition takes the existing laws as a given rather than treating them as a social reality that has been "constructed." A systematic analysis of "societal reactions" questions existing reality and asks why certain behaviors are labeled as crime and others are not. It also asks why definitions of these behaviors can change over time.

Take, for example, the sexual assault of women that occurs on a date. Until recently, these assaults were not seen or treated as "rape." This label was largely reserved for those victimizations in which a woman was raped by a stranger and visibly injured in the process of resisting the assault—the signs that a "real rape" had taken place (Estrich, 1987). The lengthy struggle of women's rights groups, however, challenged what should be considered a rape. The invention and growing acceptance of the concept of "date rape" redefined sexual assaults committed in intimate relationships. Coercion, not whether the victim and offender knew one another, was trumpeted as the criterion that should distinguish when the crime of rape has been committed. A new reality thus was constructed in which the legal category of rape took on expanded meaning and encompassed a wider range of victimizations (Fisher et al., 2010).

Second, once labels or categories of crime have been invented, not everyone who "breaks the law" is detected and designated a "criminal." Being a "criminal," therefore, does not depend only on a person's actions but on how others react to that person. Various factors—legal and extralegal—affect whether a label is attached and, as a result, the person's public reputation is qualitatively altered.

Commenting on the concept of deviance—in words that just as well could be applied to the concept of crime—Howard Becker (1963) captured the thrust of the labeling theory argument that deviance is socially constructed rather than an invariant, objective reality. He began by noting that the traditional "sociological view … defines deviance as the infraction of some agreed-upon rule." But "such an assumption … ignore[s] the central fact about deviance: it is created by society." More specifically, "*social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance*, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders." In Becker's view, then, "deviance is *not* a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to the 'offender.'" Labeling or societal reaction thus creates deviants. "The deviant is one to whom the label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label" (all quotes from Becker, 1963: 8–9, emphasis in the original).

While these concerns illuminated the need to study the creation and application of labels, the third focus of labeling theory was on the *consequences* of being labeled and treated as a criminal. As noted, in a rejection of offender-based explanations of crime, labeling theorists argued that reacting to people as "criminals" initiated processes that had the self-fulfilling prophecy of making the person become a criminal—someone more deeply entrenched in a criminal career. They noted that once a person bore the label of a "criminal," it became a "master status"—the most salient public feature of that person. Being a "criminal" thus serves as the focal point of virtually every interaction, a defining designation that cannot be escaped.

Drawing on the sociological theory of symbolic interactionism, labeling theorists argued that a person's identity or self-conception is shaped by the messages other people deliver as to "who the person is." Although the process is not rigidly deterministic—identities can be resisted and can be manipulated (e.g., by "putting one's best foot forward")—

the constant appraisal that a person is a "criminal" eventually takes its toll. Over time, those who have been labeled come to embrace the idea that they are, in fact, "criminals." This identity in turn makes choosing crime more likely, as people act consistently with their public and now privately held identity.

Labeling transforms not only a person's identity but also his or her social relationships. Although not often phrased this way, in essence scholars saw labeling as triggering the very conditions that competing theories linked to crime. Thus, once stigmatized as a "criminal," the person loses conventional social relationships (social bond theory), is forced to associate mainly with other criminals—whether in prison or on the streets (social learning theory), and as an "ex-offender" is denied opportunities for employment (strain theory). Engulfed by these criminogenic conditions, the labeled person is constrained to pursue a life in crime.

As the 1960s progressed, labeling theory's popularity grew to the point where it rivaled, if not surpassed, that of more traditional theoretical perspectives (Cole, 1975). As Hagan (1973) notes, part of labeling theory's appeal was that it was "interesting." Criminologists are attracted to ideas, says Hagan, that reverse a "conventionally assumed causal sequence" (1973: 456), which is precisely what labeling theory attempts. Thus, common sense would dictate that arresting, trying, imprisoning, and rehabilitating offenders would make crime less likely; after all, the manifest function of processing offenders through the criminal justice system is to reduce their recidivism and to make society safer. The unique twist to labeling theory was the claim that these very efforts to prevent crime actually cause crime.

But labeling theory was appealing for another reason. The theory, if correct, contained a stinging critique of state power as exercised by the criminal justice system. Recall that during the 1960s and early 1970s, the United States was greeted with revelation after revelation of the government abusing its power—from Civil Rights demonstrators being beaten, to inmates being gunned down at Attica, to students being shot at Kent State, to Viet Nam, to Watergate, and on and on. As trust in the state plummeted—especially on university campuses—a theory that blamed the government for causing more harm than good struck a chord of truth. Labeling theory, of course, did precisely this in arguing that the criminal justice system stigmatized offenders and ultimately trapped them in a criminal career. The obvious policy implication was to reduce state intervention into the lives of offenders (Schur, 1973). Most important, juveniles were to be diverted from the system altogether, and virtually all offenders were to be kept out of prison.

In 1973, William Chambliss brought to life the key insights of labeling theory in his classic essay, "The Saints and the Roughnecks" (Chapter 18 in this volume). In an ethnographic study, Chambliss (1973: 24) spent two years "hanging out with two groups of youths from "Hannibal High School"—one group of "eight promising young men" who he called "the Saints" and "six lower-class white boys known as the Roughnecks." Although the members of both groups engaged in a variety of delinquent acts, their waywardness was viewed differently by the townspeople, school officials, and police. The Saints were seen as "good boys who just went in for the occasional prank," observed Chambliss. "After all they were well dressed, well mannered and had nice cars" (p. 27). By contrast, "everyone agreed that the not-so-well-dressed, not-so-well-mannered, not-so-rich" Roughnecks "were heading for trouble" (p. 27). The Saints' delinquency also was less visible, in part because they used their cars to drive to another community to engage in shenanigans and in part because the police saw little reason to stop such "good boys who were among the leaders of the youth in the community" (p. 26). "Lacking transportation," however, the Roughnecks were more likely to hang out and misbehave in public spaces in "the center of town" (p. 29). They tended to be impolite to adults and to be "constantly involved with the police" (p. 27). In different ways, social class thus played an integral role in shaping which group was labeled as "young criminals" (p. 28).

These labels proved consequential. Despite their deviance, all but one Saint moved on to college and then to a successful career. Two of the Roughnecks escaped a life course in crime by earning football scholarships to college, later marrying and becoming high school teachers and coaches. Most other members of the group, however, ended

up involved in crime, with two serving time in prison on murder charges. Chambliss (1973: 31) described the labeling process that to this outcome:

> The community responded to the Roughnecks as boys in trouble, and the boys agreed with that perception. Their pattern of deviancy was reinforced, and breaking away from it became increasingly unlikely. Once the boys acquired an image of themselves as deviants, they selected new friends who affirmed their self-image. As that self-conception became more firmly entrenched, they also became willing to try new and more extreme deviances. With their growing alienation came freer expression of disrespect and hostility for representatives of the legitimate society. This disrespect increased the community's negativism, perpetuating the entire process of commitment to deviance.

Despite its intuitive appeal, the long-term viability of labeling theory as a comprehensive explanation of crime was undermined by the disclosure of an empirical weakness (see especially Gove, 1980; cf. Cullen and Cullen, 1978). In its most extreme and interesting form, labeling theory proposed that societal reaction, especially by the criminal justice system, was the key factor in—indeed, a necessary and sufficient condition for—offenders becoming stabilized in a criminal career. But this claim is obviously false, as early critics realized (see, e.g., Mankoff, 1971). As life-course research reveals, stability of crime and deviance often emerges early in life before formal interventions have taken place (see, e.g., Moffitt, 1993 [Chapter 43]; Sampson and Laub, 1993). That is, being officially labeled through an arrest, conviction, and prison sentence often comes in response to an individual's breaking the law and becoming entrenched in a criminal role. As will be noted, the fact that life-course-persistent offending has its origins in other conditions does not mean that labeling, when it occurs, has no effect. Although not the sole cause of offending, research suggests that it is a contributing factor to deepening criminal involvement.

On a broader level, labeling theory wishes to pretend that being raised in criminogenic conditions for 10, 15, or 20 years is largely inconsequential. The effects of these day-in and day-out experiences—such as having a dysfunctional family life, associating with delinquent friends, and failing at school—are said to pale in comparison to the effects, albeit over a more limited time, of being arrested and perhaps jailed. This assertion is not credible and cannot be sustained empirically. If true, it would mean that all other theories of crime would be incorrect because they attribute criminal involvement to an array of factors that do not include labeling either in the community or by criminal justice officials.

Contemporary Labeling Theories

Chastened by withering critiques of labeling theory, criminologists moved on to other theoretical frameworks. Whereas they had once embraced the theory without any evidence of its validity (Hagan, 1973), criminologists now rejected labeling theory on the grounds that the perspective "had no empirical support." More recently, however, a revisionist position has emerged that suggests that it would be premature to dismiss societal reaction as irrelevant to crime causation. Thus, a number of quality studies have shown that contact with the criminal justice system increases recidivism (see Farrington and Murray, 2014). The research on the criminogenic effect of system involvement on juveniles is mounting (Cullen, Chouhy, et al., 2020; Motz et al., 2020).

Of particular concern, more than 6.4 million adults—1 in every 40 in the United States—are under correctional supervision on any given day. This figure includes nearly 4.4 million on probation or parole and more than 2.1 million in prison or jail (Maruschak and Minton, 2020). Some evidence exists that due to inmate releases tied to the Covid-19 pandemic, the incarcerated population may have slipped to 1.8 million, at least temporarily (Kang-Brown et al., 2021). Imprisonment is racially disproportionate. As Currie (2020: 206) notes, the "prison incarceration rate for African American men is more than 2,300 per 100,000 population, six times the rate for whites." Moreover, it is

estimated that more than 600,000 federal and state inmates return to society annually (Jonson and Cullen, 2015). During the past decade, there has been a much-belated but growing recognition that successful prisoner reentry is a pressing problem (Gunnison and Helfgott, 2013; Mears and Cochran, 2015; Petersilia, 2003; Travis, 2005). Imprisonment is known to disrupt family relationships and to decrease job prospects by stigmatizing people as "ex-offenders" (Alexander, 2010; Pager, 2007; Pattillo et al., 2004). Programs to help those reentering the community assume productive prosocial roles are in short supply. Not surprisingly, recidivism rates among returnees are high (Jonson and Cullen, 2015).

In fact, the existing empirical evidence suggests that placing offenders in prison does little to deter future criminality and, in fact, may be criminogenic (Cullen et al., 2011; Nagin et al., 2009; Petrich et al., 2021). That is, imprisonment may have labeling effects, creating rather than preventing criminal involvement (see also Cullen and Jonson, 2017). In this context, understanding the impact of societal reaction on individuals takes on renewed criminological significance.

In this regard, four theoretical developments have emerged that may help to revitalize interest in studying the effects of societal reaction: Ross Matsueda's focus on informal reactions, John Braithwaite's focus on reintegrative shaming, Lawrence Sherman's focus on defiance, and Shadd Maruna's focus on redemption scripts.

First, within criminology, labeling theory had usually been interpreted as contending that the application of *formal* criminal sanctions was the key societal reaction that fostered career criminality. This position made sense, since criminal sanctions involved a person's official and public designation as a "criminal" and could involve a lengthy stay behind bars. Less attention was paid, however, to the potential role played by *informal* sanctions—that is, the societal reactions of parents, friends, neighbors, and the like. There is at least beginning evidence that, under some circumstances, informal societal reactions can worsen wayward conduct (see, e.g., Triplett and Jarjoura, 1994; Ward and Tittle, 1993; see also Wells and Rankin, 1988).

Ross Matsueda provides the most sophisticated theoretical statement of the potential criminogenic effects of informal labeling. Drawing on symbolic interactionism, Matsueda argues that a key proximate cause of delinquent behavior is the "reflected appraisals of others"—that is, a youth's perception that other people, especially those "significant" to the youngster (e.g., parents)—view him or her as a "delinquent." In part, this reflected appraisal is influenced by the youth's own behavior: juveniles who engage in delinquency are more likely to believe that others see them as "troublemakers." Reflected appraisals also are influenced, however, by the "actual appraisals of others." Thus, when youngsters are appraised or labeled as a delinquent (e.g., by their parents), they perceive that others see them as wayward and act upon this conception of themselves. In short, labeling creates a delinquent "self," which in turn prompts illegal conduct. It is noteworthy that Matsueda has marshaled evidence supporting this causal sequence (Bartusch and Matsueda, 1996; Matsueda, 1992; see also Heimer and Matsueda, 1994).

Second, another avenue for the revitalization of labeling theory starts with the observation that the effects of societal reaction are contingent on a range of factors. Traditional statements of labeling theory assumed that societal reaction virtually always increases crime and deviance. This thesis, however, is clearly false. Research from corrections, for example, shows that while punitive interventions have no effect or increase recidivism, rehabilitation programs reduce future criminality (Bonta and Andrews, 2017; Cullen and Jonson, 2014; Manchak and Cullen, 2015).

John Braithwaite (1989 [Chapter 19]) has developed the most noteworthy attempt to specify when societal reaction, whether formal or informal, results in more or less criminality (see also Braithwaite et al., 2006). "The first step to productive theorizing about crime is to think about the contention that labeling offenders makes things worse. The contention," observes Braithwaite (1989: 12), "is both right and wrong." When a criminal act is detected, attempts usually are made to "shame" the person, a concept used to encompass "all social processes of expressing disapproval

which have the intention or effect of invoking remorse in the person being shamed and/or condemnation by others who become aware of the shaming" (p. 100). Whether such shaming "makes things worse," however, depends on the *quality* of the societal reaction.

In his central proposition, Braithwaite argues, consistent with labeling theory, that *stigmatizing* shaming increases crime. In this instance, "no effort is made to reconcile the offender with the community" (1989: 101). Instead, the offender is made into an outcast and is cut off from conventional relationships. As a result, the offender joins criminal subcultures, where his or her criminality is reinforced and opportunities to commit illegal acts are plentiful.

Unlike labeling theory, however, Braithwaite recognizes that another form of societal reaction exists: *reintegrative* shaming, a process in which shaming "is followed by efforts to reintegrate the offender back into the community of law-abiding or respectable citizens through words or gestures of forgiveness or ceremonies to decertify the offender as deviant" (2002: 100–101; see also Maruna, 2011a, b). This type of shaming sends a message to the individual and to the larger community that the offender's behavior is wrong and should not be repeated. At the same time, the reintegrative aspect of the reaction communicates that the offender as a person is not beyond redemption. Accepting the repentant offender back into the community reinforces the offender's conventional social bonds and keeps him or her from seeking out the company of other criminals. The result is that reintegrative shaming strengthens prosocial influences in the offender's life and thus reduces recidivism.

Third, similar to Braithwaite, Lawrence Sherman (1993) observes that, depending on the circumstances, interventions into the lives of offenders can have diverse effects. Thus, Sherman (1993: 445) contends that "legal punishment either reduces, increases, or has no effect on future crimes, depending on the type of offenders, offenses, social settings, and levels of analysis." Sherman proposes that in the face of criminal penalties, "defiance" and thus greater crime are likely to result when offenders are poorly bonded to society and define the sanctions against them as stigmatizing and unfair. In contrast, recidivism is less likely when offenders have close ties to conventional society (e.g., employment) and see the sanctions against them as deserved and fairly applied.

Sherman (2000) also understands, however, that the objective quality of the sanction is a salient consideration in whether defiant criminality is, or is not, produced by criminal justice interventions. Again, offenders may react very differently to the same sanction depending on their social bonds and sensitivity to injustice (i.e., the tendency to see attempts to control their misconduct as "disrespecting" them). Nonetheless, Sherman's theory suggests that the quality of the behavior of police, court, and correctional officials also plays a role in precipitating or depressing the likelihood of defiance. If, in interacting with offenders, these officials act with respect, with procedural fairness, and integratively, defiance is less likely to occur than if they act with disrespect, arbitrarily, and harshly. In short, defiance is the result of a complex interaction between the objective quality of the sanction being applied and how this sanction is interpreted by offenders (again, depending on their social bonds and social attitudes; for an updated version of defiance theory, see Sherman, 2010).

Fourth, a unique insight of labeling theory is that "dramatizing evil" and stigmatizing rule-breakers as "the other" can lead individuals to internalize a criminal identity or self-concept that then directs them to deepen their offending. Implicit in this traditional view, however, is that identities are stable, contribute to secondary deviance, and help to entrench the labeled in a life in crime. But what if a criminal identity was not static but dynamic—something that could be transformed from "being bad" to "making good"? If this were the case, then offenders might develop a prosocial identity and escape their criminal careers. It is precisely this possibility—and thus this fresh line of inquiry—that Shadd Maruna (2001) explored in his book *Making Good* (Chapter 20 in this volume).

Maruna argued that an identity was not a fixed, trait-like self-concept, such as "I am a delinquent." Drawing on the work of psychologist Dan McAdams (2001), he conceptualized identity as an evolving life story—or "narrative"—that

people use to make sense of who they are, why they act as they do, and what their future might hold. These stories are said to give individuals, including offenders, coherence and meaning in their lives. They are not "fairy tales" invented to rationalize untoward behavior but a causal identity that shapes everyday choices (McAdams, 2001: 100). Maruna used this perspective when he analyzed interview data from the Liverpool Desistance Study, a project on which he was the co-principal investigator in the latter part of the 1990s. He was particularly interested in comparing two groups of career criminals similar in almost every respect: a group of 20 subjects who were persisting in crime and a group of 30 subjects who had desisted from crime. Although all of these offenders had lengthy criminal histories and faced dire economic circumstances, some had nonetheless given up a life in crime in favor of attempting to "make good" in society. Why was this so? According to Maruna, the key differentiating factor was the type of narrative identity the offenders embraced.

Maruna (2001) argued that there were two narrative or life-story identities that offenders manifested—a "condemnation script" and a "redemption script." Consistent with traditional labeling theory, the group of persisters using a condemnation script saw themselves as "doomed to deviance" and as so ensnared in a criminal life course that they had no control to change their wayward destiny. By contrast, the group of desisters using a redemption script believed that change was possible and that they could create a good life. They tended to see their past crimes as not reflecting their "real self," were optimistic (perhaps unrealistically so) that they could overcome the obstacles they now faced, and felt that they could devote themselves to serving a higher purpose, such as sharing their experiences to counsel others on how to stop offending. As the title of Maruna's book noted, they were now "making good."

Maruna's work thus enriched labeling theory by developing a more sophisticated view of the criminal identity and by showing that a narrative identity could be a source of both persistence in and desistance from crime. His work has implications for stability and change in offending across the life course, as will be seen in Part XIII, where theories of this genre are presented. Some evidence in support of Maruna's approach has appeared (see, e.g., Bullock et al., 2019; Stone, 2016). More studies, especially quantitative research using larger samples of offenders, are needed to further substantiate and perhaps refine Maruna's theoretical insights (see Rocque et al., 2016).

Policy Implications

The ideas of Sherman (1993, 2000) and of Braithwaite (1989) have important policy implications. Traditionally, the mantra of labeling theory was "radical non-intervention" (Schur, 1973)—to do whatever possible to limit criminal justice interventions into the lives of offenders. This perspective assumed that, due to powerful labeling effects, such legal interventions were *uniformly* harmful. Sherman and Braithwaite, however, reject this view. Although they would agree that many sanctions *as they are now being applied* are criminogenic, they believe that the potential exists to create sanctions that do more good than harm (see also Cullen and Jonson, 2017). The need to do so also is seemingly indisputable. Thus, with more than 6.4 million people either incarcerated or under probation and parole supervision on any given day, talk of nonintervention is farfetched. Either those in the correctional population continue to receive traditional penalties, or an effort is made to construct more effective and humane criminal justice sanctions.

Along with a number of other scholars and activists (Braithwaite, 2002, 2020), Sherman and Braithwaite have endorsed a reform known as "restorative justice." In brief, this strategy seeks to dislodge the state from its traditional role as an adversary that exacts justice by prosecuting and inflicting pain on lawbreakers. Instead, under restorative justice, the state functions as an arbiter or partner that works with the victim and the offender to reduce the harm

associated with the criminal act that has been committed. This goal is achieved through a sanctioning process that "restores" victims, the community, and the offender.

A key component of this restorative strategy is a "conference" attended by the victim and offender, their family members, other community members with a stake in the proceedings, and some type of mediator. When faced with the victim, the injury caused, and the shamefulness of their conduct, offenders may be moved to apologize for the crimes they have perpetrated. In any event, the conferences reach a consensus on a plan that will enable offenders to restore the harm they have caused (e.g., by making restitution to the victim, through community service). Furthermore, these agreements reject incarceration, believing that the prison experience is stigmatizing, harm producing, and unlikely to be restorative. Rather, in exchange for working to restore their harms, offenders remain in the community, where they receive support to reintegrate them into conventional social roles (e.g., help securing employment, mentoring, tutoring to achieve higher grades).

The key policy issue is how much recidivism is reduced by restorative justice programs. The research reveals that such programs do lower reoffending and clearly are more effective than punitive sanctions. Still, the effects of these interventions tend to be fairly modest and are not as strong as the best-designed rehabilitation programs (Bonta and Andrews, 2017; Cullen and Jonson, 2017). One alternative option is to combine restorative justice with what is known about the principles of effective treatment (Cullen et al., 2001).

Beyond the issue of restorative justice, labeling theory sensitizes policymakers to the need to reduce the stigma associated with a criminal conviction. During the get-tough era that reigned for most of the past four decades, systematic efforts were made to define offenders as "the other" and to exclude them from many of the rights and privileges enjoyed by American citizens (Alexander, 2010; Jacobs, 2015). In particular, legislatures passed hundreds of laws that barred ex-offenders, especially those convicted of a felony, from voting, sitting on juries, collecting welfare benefits, living in public housing, taking out college loans, and many types of employment. Labeling theory would predict that these punitive policies—called the "collateral consequences of conviction"—are unlikely to deter future wrongdoing and, if anything, would be criminogenic because they sever offenders' social bonds to conventional society. Notably, over the past decade, there has been a growing recognition that these restrictions are counterproductive, and efforts are being made to roll back collateral consequences (Burton et al., 2020). For example, more than 150 cities and counties and 35 states have passed "ban-the-box" statutes that preclude employers from asking job applicants to disclose whether they have a criminal record (usually by checking a box on the application; see Burton et al., 2020). Employers can only consider past offenses once they have winnowed the list of applicants to the stage at which interviews are conducted.

However, in *The Eternal Criminal Record*, Jacobs (2015) reminds us that it may be impossible for the vast majority of ex-offenders to conceal their past legal indiscretions and fully escape a life of stigmatization (see also Lageson, 2020). In the age of the internet, where governments provide public access to computerized criminal records and sell this information to commercial vendors, the capacity to conduct background checks is virtually unlimited. One policy option is to expand the opportunity for offenders who remain crime-free for several years to have their criminal records "wiped clean" by having them sealed or expunged (Jacobs, 2015). The public supports this initiative, especially for those convicted of property and substance-abuse offenses and who stay crime free for 7–10 years (Burton et al., 2021).

In this context, Shadd Maruna (2001: 155) asks us to do more—to recognize that the legal system should create a process for "recognizing redemption" (see Chapter 20). In various writings, Maruna (2011a, b) has proposed the creation of a formal ceremony, with all the rituals of other rites of passage (e.g., high school graduation), at which offenders would be declared rehabilitated. These might be called rehabilitation or redemption ceremonies; regardless, the purpose is to declare that an offender has been restored to full citizenship with all the rights and

privileges that bestows. To earn redemption, offenders would have to complete their sentence, perhaps stay crime-free for a time period commensurate to their criminal history, and undertake self-improvement (e.g., hold a job, complete a drug treatment program; see Cullen, Lee, et al., 2020). Importantly, a national study reports that a large percentage (8 in 10) of the American public support the creation of such ceremonies that would recognize redemption by declaring ex-offenders "'rehabilitated' and free from all legal penalties and other collateral sanctions of their crimes" (Butler et al., 2020: 43; see also Thielo, 2017).

In closing, at this point in its development, it is unlikely that labeling theory—even in its most sophisticated forms, such as the perspectives of Matsueda, Braithwaite, Sherman, and Maruna—will provide a complete explanation of criminal behavior. Frequently, it would seem, societal reaction is the result, rather than the cause, of lawbreaking. A large omission in labeling theory is that it places little focus on the early years of life during which the conduct problems that underlie much stable serious criminality first emerge. Labeling theorists also often pay insufficient attention to how, independent of societal reaction, structural inequality and the concentration of disadvantage in inner-city communities might affect behavior.

Nonetheless, scholars working in this tradition have identified a factor—stigmatizing, rejecting, nasty societal reactions—that rarely makes matters better and more often serves only to solidify an offender's commitment to a criminal career. It would be unwise, therefore, for criminologists to assume that "labeling has no effects," and more prudent for them to continue to specify the conditions under which societal reaction pushes offenders into, rather than out of, a life in crime (Farrington and Murray, 2014).

References

Alexander, Michelle. 2010. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press.

Bartusch, Dawn Jeglum and Ross L. Matsueda, 1996. "Gender, Reflected Appraisals, and Labeling: A Cross-Group Test of an Interactionist Theory of Delinquency." *Social Forces* **75**: 145–177.

Becker, Howard S. 1963. *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York: Free Press.

Bonta, James and D. A. Andrews. 2017. *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*, 6th edition. New York: Routledge.

Braithwaite, John. 1989. *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

____. 2020. "Restorative Justice and Reintegrative Shaming." In Cecilia Chouhy, Joshua C. Cochran, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (eds.), *Criminal Justice Theory: Explanations and Effects—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **26**, pp. 281–308. New York: Routledge.

____. 2002. *Restorative Justice and Responsive Regulation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Braithwaite, John, Eliza Ahmed, and Valerie Braithwaite. 2006. "Shame, Restorative Justice, and Crime." In Francis T. Cullen, John Paul Wright, and Kristie R. Blevins (eds.), *Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **15**, pp. 397–417. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Bullock, Karen, Annie Bunce, and Daniel McCarthy. 2019. "Making Good in Unpromising Places: The Development and Cultivation of Redemption Scripts Among Long-Term Prisoners." *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* **63**: 406–423.

Burton, Alexander L., Velmer S. Burton, Jr., Francis T. Cullen, Justin T. Pickett, Leah C. Butler, and Angela J. Thielo. 2020. "Beyond the New Jim Crow: Public Support for Removing and Regulating Collateral Consequences." *Federal Probation* **84** (3): 19–33.

Burton, Alexander L., Francis T. Cullen, Justin T. Pickett, Velmer S. Burton, Jr., and Angela J. Thielo. 2021. "Beyond the Eternal Criminal Record: Public Support for Expungement." *Criminology and Public Policy* ***20:*** 123–151.

Butler, Leah C., Francis T. Cullen, Alexander L. Burton, Angela J. Thielo, and Velmer S. Burton, Jr. 2020. "Redemption at a Correctional Turning Point: Public Support for Rehabilitation Ceremonies." *Federal Probation* **84** (1): 38–47.

Chambliss, William J. 1973. "The Saints and the Roughnecks." *Society* **11** (1): 24–31.

Cole, Stephen. 1975. "The Growth of Scientific Knowledge: Theories of Deviance as a Case Study." In Lewis A. Coser (ed.), *The Idea of Social Structure: Papers in Honor of Robert K. Merton*, pp. 175–220. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Cullen, Francis T., Cecilia Chouhy, and Cheryl Lero Jonson. 2020. "The Saints and the Roughnecks Revisited: How Labeling Kids Creates Criminals." In Cecilia Chouhy, Joshua C. Cochran, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (eds.), *Criminal Justice Theory: Explanations and Effects—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **26**, pp. 253–280. New York: Routledge.

Cullen, Francis T. and John B. Cullen. 1978. "Labeling Theory and the Empty Castle Phenomenon." *Western Sociological Review* **9**: 28–38.

Cullen, Francis T. and Cheryl Lero Jonson. 2017. *Correctional Theory: Context and Consequences*, 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cullen, Francis T. and Cheryl Lero Jonson. 2014. "Labeling Theory and Correctional Rehabilitation: Beyond Unanticipated Consequences." In David P. Farrington and Joseph Murray (eds.), *Labeling Theory: Empirical Tests—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **18**, pp. 63–65. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Cullen, Francis T., Cheryl Lero Jonson, and Daniel S. Nagin. 2011. "Prisons Do Not Reduce Recidivism: The High Cost of Ignoring Science." *Prison Journal* **91**: 48S–65S.

Cullen, Francis T., Heejin Lee, Leah C. Butler, and Angela J. Thielo. 2020. "Rehabilitation and Redemption: Building a New Corrections." In Cecilia Chouhy, Joshua C. Cochran, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (eds.), *Criminal Justice Theory: Explanations and Effects—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **26**, pp. 309–335. New York: Routledge.

Cullen, Francis T., Jody L. Sundt, and John F. Wozniak. 2001. "The Virtuous Prison: Toward a Restorative Rehabilitation." In Henry N. Pontell and David Shichor (eds.), *Contemporary Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice: Essays in Honor of Gilbert Geis*, pp. 265–286. Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Currie, Elliott. 2020. *A Peculiar Indifference: The Neglected Toll of Violence on Black America*. New York: Metropolitan Books.

Erikson, Kai T. 1966. *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York: John Wiley.

Estrich, Susan. 1987. *Real Rape*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Farrington, David P. and Joseph Murray, eds. 2014. *Labeling Theory: Empirical Tests—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **18**. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Fisher, Bonnie S., Leah E. Daigle, and Francis T. Cullen. 2010. *Unsafe in the Ivory Tower: The Sexual Victimization of College Women*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gove, Walter R., ed. 1980. *The Labelling of Deviance*, 2nd edition. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Gunnison, Elaine and Jacqueline B. Helfgott. 2013. *Offender Reentry: Beyond Crime and Punishment*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Hagan, John. 1973. "Labelling and Deviance: A Case Study in the 'Sociology of the Interesting.'" *Social Problems* **20**: 447–458.

Heimer, Karen and Ross L. Matsueda. 1994. "Role-Taking, Role Commitment, and Delinquency: A Theory of Differential Social Control." *American Sociological Review* **59**: 365–390.

Jacobs, James B. 2015. *The Eternal Criminal Record*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Jonson, Cheryl Lero and Francis T. Cullen. 2015. "Prisoner Reentry Programs." In Michael Tonry (ed.), *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, Volume **44**, pp. 517–575. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kang-Brown, Jacob, Chase Montagnet, and Jasmine Heiss. 2021. *People in Jail and Prison in 2020*. Brooklyn, NY: Vera Institute of Justice.

Kitsuse, John I. 1964. "Societal Reaction to Deviant Behavior: Problems of Theory and Method." In Howard S. Becker (ed.), *The Other Side*, pp. 87–102. New York: Free Press.

Lageson, Sarah Esther. 2020. *Digital Punishment: Privacy, Stigma, and Harms of Date-Driven Criminal Justice*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lemert, Edwin M. 1972. *Human Deviance, Social Problems, and Social Control*, 2nd edition. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Lemert, Edwin M. 1951. *Social Pathology: A Systematic Approach to the Theory of Sociopathic Behavior*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Manchak, Sarah M. and Francis T. Cullen. 2015. "Intervening Effectively with Juvenile Offenders: Answers from Meta-Analysis." In Julien Morizot and Lila Kazemian (eds.), *The Development of Criminal and Antisocial Behavior: Theoretical Foundations and Practical Applications*, pp. 477–490. New York: Springer.

Mankoff, Milton. 1971. "Societal Reaction and Career Deviance: A Critical Analysis." *Sociological Quarterly* **12**: 204–218.

Maruna, Shadd. 2011a. "Judicial Rehabilitation and the 'Clean Bill of Health' in Criminal Justice." *European Journal of Probation* **3**: 97–117.

Maruna, Shadd. 2001. *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Maruna, Shadd. 2011b. "Reentry as a Rite of Passage." *Punishment and Society* **13**: 3–28.

Maruschak, Laura L. and Todd D. Minton. 2020. *Correctional Populations in the United States, 2017–2018*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice.

Matsueda, Ross L. 1992. "Reflected Appraisals, Parental Labeling, and Delinquency: Specifying a Symbolic Interactionist Theory." *American Journal of Sociology* **6**: 1577–1611.

McAdams, Dan P. 2001. "The Psychology of Life Stories." *Review of General Psychology* **5**: 100–122.

Mears, Daniel P. and Joshua C. Cochran. 2015. *Prisoner Reentry in the Era of Mass Incarceration*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Moffitt, Terrie E. 1993. "Adolescence-Limited and Life-Course-Persistent Antisocial Behavior: A Developmental Taxonomy." *Psychological Review* **100**: 674–701.

Motz, Ryan T., J. C. Barnes, Avshalom Caspi, Louise Arseneault, Francis T. Cullen, Renate Houts, Jasmin Wertz, and Terrie E. Moffitt. 2020. "Does Contact with the Justice System Deter or Promote Future Delinquency? Results from a Longitudinal Study of British Adolescent Twins." *Criminology* **58**: 307–335.

Nagin, Daniel S., Francis T. Cullen, and Cheryl Lero Jonson. 2009. "Imprisonment and Reoffending." In Michael Tonry (ed.), *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, Volume **38**, pp. 115–200. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pager, Devah. 2007. *Marked: Race, Crime, and Finding Work in an Era of Mass Incarceration*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pattillo, Mary, David Weiman, and Bruce Western, eds. 2004. *Imprisoning America: The Social Effects of Mass Incarceration*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Petersilia, Joan. 2003. *When Prisoners Come Home: Parole and Prisoner Reentry*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Petrich, Damon M., Travis C. Pratt, Cheryl Lero Jonson, and Francis T. Cullen. 2021. "A Revolving Door? A Meta-Analysis of the Impact of Custodial Sanctions on Reoffending." Unpublished paper, University of Cincinnati.

Rocque, Michael, Chad Posick, and Ray Paternoster. 2016. "Identities Through Time: An Exploration of Identity Change as a Cause of Deterrence." *Justice Quarterly* **33**: 45–72.

Rosenberg, Michael J. 2010. "Lemert, Edwin M.: Primary and Secondary Deviance." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*, pp. 550–552. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sampson, Robert J. and John H. Laub. 1993. *Crime in the Making: Pathways and Turning Points Through Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Schur, Edwin M. 1973. *Radical Non-Intervention: Rethinking the Delinquency Problem*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Schur, Edwin M. 1969. "Reactions to Deviance: A Critical Assessment." *American Journal of Sociology* **75**: 309–322.

Shaw, Clifford R. 1966 [1930]. *The Jack-Roller: A Delinquent Boy's Own Story*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sherman, Lawrence W. 2010. "Defiance, Compliance, and Consilience: A General Theory of Criminology." In Eugene McLaughlin and Tim Newburn (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 360–390. London: Sage.

Sherman, Lawrence W. 1993. "Defiance, Deterrence, and Irrelevance: A Theory of the Criminal Sanction." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **30**: 445–473.

____. 2000. (February 24). *The Defiant Imagination: Consilience and the Science of Sanctions*. Albert M. Greenfield Chair Inaugural Lecture delivered at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

Stone, Rebecca. 2016. "Desistance and Identity Repair: Redemption Narratives as Resistance to Stigma." *British Journal of Criminology* **56**: 956–975.

Tannenbaum, Frank. 1938. *Crime and the Community*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Thielo, Angela J. 2017. *Redemption in an Era of Penal Harm: Moving Beyond Offender Exclusion*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cincinnati.

Travis, Jeremy. 2005. *But They All Come Back: Facing the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press.

Triplett, Ruth A. and G. Roger Jarjoura. 1994. "Theoretical and Empirical Specification of a Model of Informal Labeling." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **10**: 241–276.

Ward, David A. and Charles R. Tittle. 1993. "Deterrence or Labeling: The Effects of Informal Sanctions." *Deviant Behavior* **14**: 43–64.

Wells, L. Edward and Joseph H. Rankin. 1988. "Direct Parental Controls and Delinquency." *Criminology* **26**: 263–285.

18.
The Saints and the Roughnecks*

William J. Chambliss

"The Saints and the Roughnecks" appeared in 1973 at a time when labeling theory rivaled other perspectives as the leading explanation of delinquency. Based on a qualitative study of two groups of youths by William J. Chambliss, this essay brought to life the realities of labeling articulated in a more abstract way in scholarly works. In particular, Chambliss illuminated a special hidden injury of social class: differential exposure to criminal justice labeling and the dramatic impact it can have in shaping life-course trajectories.

Based on self-report surveys, research at this time questioned the connection between economic disadvantage and crime. In his classic study Causes of Delinquency, *for example, Travis Hirschi (1969: 75; see Chapter 16) concluded that "there is in the present sample no important relationship between social class as traditionally measured and delinquency." Other scholars, such as David Matza (1964: 22), argued that most youths experienced "maturational reform," experimenting with wayward conduct in the teen years but moving away from these indiscretions as they transitioned into adulthood. Taken together, works of this genre highlighted two important points. First, if participation in delinquency was not class-based, then the differential involvement of poor youths in the criminal justice system involved bias in who was seen as a "bad kid," arrested, and treated as a criminal. Second, for those pulled into the justice system, the risk existed that their natural maturational reform would be interrupted, and they would be diverted into a life in crime.*

Chambliss (1973: 24) spent two years "hanging out" with two groups of youths from "Hannibal High School"—"eight promising young men," who he called "The Saints," and "six lower-class white boys known as the Roughnecks." Consistent with the findings of Hirschi and others, he concluded that both sets of youths engaged in approximately the same amount of wayward behavior. The class advantage of the Saints, however, insulated them against stigmatization. Their acts were less visible, their demeanor was more respectful, and any deviance was seen as their just sowing their oats. By contrast, the Roughnecks committed their acts locally and in public spaces, reacted to authority with confrontation, and were defined as troublemakers that police and teachers needed to monitor and discipline.

Chambliss would later capture a key insight of labeling theory—that stigmatizing labels can be internalized and shape future conduct. In comments shared with Michelle Inderbitzin and Heather Boyd (2010 : 205), he defined as a "major surprise" just "how readily the boys in each group accepted the labels attached to them even though the levels were incompatible with their actual behavior." Escaping any labeling, nearly all the Saints attended college and proceeded to have successful careers. By contrast, some of the Roughnecks "lived up to community expectations" and engaged in adult crime and were imprisoned. Notably, two members of the group—Jack and Herb—received college athletic scholarships, a turning point that led them into positions "teaching and coaching in high schools" (Chambliss, 1973: 31). Chambliss reflected on "how easily some of them (the two football players) changed their self-image, their behavior and their lives" (Inderbitzin and Boyd, 2010 : 205). Robert Sampson and John Laub (1993; see also Chapter 44) have documented how the acquisition of prosocial social bonds can foster desistance from a criminal life course.

Two final points merit attention. First, research is increasingly corroborating the labeling theory thesis that arresting youths and pulling them into the justice system increase their future criminal behavior (for a summary, see Cullen et al., 2020). Second, a half century after Chambliss's essay, contemporary scholars would not focus so much on class-based labeling but on the disparate processing of African Americans and other people of color (Feld, 2017). Class still matters, but this disadvantage is now often linked with race, exposing inner-city youths to special scrutiny by the police and damaging involvement in the justice system.

References

Chambliss, William J. 1973. "The Saints and the Roughnecks." *Society* **11** (1): 24–31.

Cullen, Francis T., Cecilia Chouhy, and Cheryl Lero Jonson. 2020. "The Saints and the Roughnecks Revisited: How Labeling Kids Creates Criminals." In Cecilia Chouhy, Joshua C. Cochran, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (eds.), *Criminal Justice Theory: Explanations and Effects—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **26**, pp. 253–280. New York: Routledge.

Feld, Barry C. 2017. *The Evolution of the Juvenile Court: Race, Politics, and the Criminalization of Juvenile Justice*. New York: New York University Press.

Hirschi, Travis. 1969. *Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Inderbitzin, Michelle and Heather Boyd. 2010. "William Chambliss (1933–)." In Keith Hayward, Shadd Maruna, and Jayne Mooney (eds.), *Fifty Key Thinkers in Criminology*, pp. 203–208. London: Routledge.

Matza, David. 1964. *Delinquency and Drift*. New York: John Wiley.

Sampson, Robert J. and John H. Laub. 1993. *Crime in the Making: Pathways and Turning Points Through Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Eight promising young men—children of good, stable, white upper-middle-class families, active in school affairs, good pre-college students—were some of the most delinquent boys at Hanibal High School. While community residents and parents knew that these boys occasionally sowed a few wild oats, they were totally unaware that sowing wild oats completely occupied the daily routine of these young men. The Saints were constantly occupied with truancy, drinking, wild driving, petty theft and vandalism. Yet not one was officially arrested for any misdeed during the two years I observed them.

This record was particularly surprising in light of my observations during the same two years of another gang of Hanibal High School students, six lower-class white boys known as the Roughnecks. The Roughnecks were constantly in trouble with police and community even though their rate of delinquency was about equal with that of the Saints. What was the cause of this disparity? the result? The following consideration of the activities, social class and community perceptions of both gangs may provide some answers….

---

* Reprinted with permission from William J. Chambliss. 1973. "The Saints and the Roughnecks." *Society* 11 (1): 24–31.

The Saints

The Saints on Weekends

On weekends the automobile was even more critical than during the week, for on weekends the Saints went to Big Town—a large city with a population of over a million 25 miles from Hanibal. Every Friday and Saturday night most of the Saints would meet between 8:00 and 8:30 and would go into Big Town. Big Town activities included drinking heavily in taverns or nightclubs, driving drunkenly through the streets, and committing acts of vandalism and playing pranks.

By midnight on Fridays and Saturdays the Saints were usually thoroughly high, and one or two of them were often so drunk they had to be carried to the cars. Then the boys drove around town, calling obscenities to women and girls; occasionally trying (unsuccessfully so far as I could tell) to pick girls up; and driving recklessly through red lights and at high speeds with their lights out....

Construction sites and road repair areas were the special province of the Saints' mischief. A soon-to-be-repaired hole in the road inevitably invited the Saints to remove lanterns and wooden barricades and put them in the car, leaving the hole unprotected. The boys would find a safe vantage point and wait for an unsuspecting motorist to drive into the hole. Often, though not always, the boys would go up to the motorist and commiserate with him about the dreadful way the city protected its citizenry....

Abandoned houses, especially if they were located in out-of-the-way places, were fair game for destruction and spontaneous vandalism. The boys would break windows, remove furniture to the yard and tear it apart, urinate on the walls and scrawl obscenities inside.

Through all the pranks, drinking and reckless driving the boys managed miraculously to avoid being stopped by police....

The boys had a spirit of frivolity and fun about their escapades. They did not view what they were engaged in as "delinquency," though it surely was by any reasonable definition of that word. They simply viewed themselves as having a little fun and who, they would ask, was really hurt by it? The answer had to be no one, although this fact remains one of the most difficult things to explain about the gang's behavior. Unlikely though it seems, in two years of drinking, driving, carousing and vandalism no one was seriously injured as a result of the Saints' activities.

The Saints in School

The Saints were highly successful in school. The average grade for the group was "B," with two of the boys having close to a straight "A" average. Almost all of the boys were popular and many of them held offices in the school. One of the boys was vice-president of the student body one year. Six of the boys played on athletic teams.

At the end of their senior year, the student body selected ten seniors for special recognition as the "school wheels"; four of the ten were Saints. Teachers and school officials saw no problem with any of these boys and anticipated that they would all "make something of themselves."

How the boys managed to maintain this impression is surprising in view of their actual behavior while in school. Their technique for covering truancy was so successful that teachers did not even realize that the boys were absent from school much of the time. Occasionally, of course, the system would backfire and then the boy was on his own. A boy who was caught would be most contrite, would plead guilty and ask for mercy. He inevitably got the mercy he sought.

Cheating on examinations was rampant, even to the point of orally communicating answers to exams as well as looking at one another's papers. Since none of the group studied, and since they were primarily dependent on one another for help, it is surprising that grades were so high. Teachers contributed to the deception in their admitted inclination to give these boys (and presumably others like them) the benefit of the doubt....

The Police and the Saints

The local police saw the Saints as good boys who were among the leaders of the youth in the community. Rarely, the boys might be stopped in town for speeding or for running a stop sign. When this happened the boys were always polite, contrite and pled for mercy. As in school, they received the mercy they asked for. None ever received a ticket or was taken into the precinct by the local police.

The situation in Big City, where the boys engaged in most of their delinquency, was only slightly different. The police there did not know the boys at all, although occasionally the boys were stopped by a patrolman. Once they were caught taking a lantern from a construction site. Another time they were stopped for running a stop sign, and on several occasions they were stopped for speeding. Their behavior was as before: contrite, polite and penitent. The urban police, like the local police, accepted their demeanor as sincere. More important, the urban police were convinced that these were good boys just out for a lark.

The Roughnecks

Hanibal townspeople never perceived the Saints' high level of delinquency. The Saints were good boys who just went in for an occasional prank. After all, they were well dressed, well mannered and had nice cars. The Roughnecks were a different story. Although the two gangs of boys were the same age, and both groups engaged in an equal amount of wild-oat sowing, everyone agreed that the not-so-well-dressed, not-so-well-mannered, not-so-rich boys were heading for trouble. Townspeople would say, "You can see the gang members at the drugstore, night after night, leaning against the storefront (sometimes drunk) or slouching around inside buying cokes, reading magazines, and probably stealing old Mr. Wall blind. When they are outside and girls walk by, even respectable girls, these boys make suggestive remarks. Sometimes their remarks are downright lewd."

From the community's viewpoint, the real indication that these kids were in for trouble was that they were constantly involved with the police. Some of them had been picked up for stealing, mostly small stuff, of course, "but still it's stealing small stuff that leads to big time crimes." "Too bad," people said. "Too bad that these boys couldn't behave like the other kids in town; stay out of trouble, be polite to adults, and look to their future."

The community's impression of the degree to which this group of six boys (ranging in age from 16 to 19) engaged in delinquency was somewhat distorted. In some ways the gang was more delinquent than the community thought; in other ways they were less....

The Roughnecks, then, engaged mainly in three types of delinquency: theft, drinking and fighting. Although community members perceived that this gang of kids was delinquent, they mistakenly believed that their illegal activities were primarily drinking, fighting and being a nuisance to passersby. Drinking was limited among the gang members, although it did occur, and theft was much more prevalent than anyone realized....

The main source of the boys' dislike for the police undoubtedly stemmed from the fact that the police would sporadically harass the group....

To the boys, the police were stupid on the one hand, for not being where they should have been and catching the boys in a serious offense, and unfair on the other hand, for trumping up "loitering" charges against them.

From the viewpoint of the police, the situation was quite different. They knew, with all the confidence necessary to be a policeman, that these boys were engaged in criminal activities. They knew this partly from occasionally catching them, mostly from circumstantial evidence ("the boys were around when those tires were slashed"), and partly because the police shared the view of the community in general that this was a bad bunch of boys. The best the police could hope to do was to be sensitive to the fact that these boys were engaged in illegal acts and arrest them whenever there was some evidence that they had been involved. Whether or not the boys had in fact committed a particular act in a particular way was not especially important. The police had a broader view: their job was to stamp out these kids' crimes; the tactics were not as important as the end result.

Over the period that the group was under observation, each member was arrested at least once. Several of the boys were arrested a number of times and spent at least one night in jail. While most were never taken to court, two of the boys were sentenced to six months' incarceration in boys' schools.

Teachers saw the boys the way the general community did, as heading for trouble, as being uninterested in making something of themselves. Some were also seen as being incapable of meeting the academic standards of the school. Most of the teachers expressed concern for this group of boys and were willing to pass them despite poor performance, in the belief that failing them would only aggravate the problem….

Two Questions

Why did the community, the school and the police react to the Saints as though they were good, upstanding, nondelinquent youths with bright futures but to the Roughnecks as though they were tough, young criminals who were headed for trouble? Why did the Roughnecks and the Saints in fact have quite different careers after high school—careers which, by and large, lived up to the expectations of the community?....

Differential treatment of the two gangs resulted in part because one gang was infinitely more visible than the other. This differential visibility was a direct function of the economic standing of the families. The Saints had access to automobiles and were able to remove themselves from the sight of the community. In as routine a decision as to where to go to have a milkshake after school, the Saints stayed away from the mainstream of community life. Lacking transportation, the Roughnecks could not make it to the edge of town. The center of town was the only practical place for them to meet since their homes were scattered throughout the town and any noncentral meeting place put an undue hardship on some members. Through necessity the Roughnecks congregated in a crowded area where everyone in the community passed frequently, including teachers and law enforcement officers. They could easily see the Roughnecks hanging around the drugstore....

To the notion of visibility must be added the difference in the responses of group members to outside intervention with their activities. If one of the Saints was confronted with an accusing policeman, even if he felt he was truly innocent of a wrongdoing, his demeanor was apologetic and penitent. A Roughneck's attitude was almost the polar opposite. When confronted with a threatening adult authority, even one who tried to be pleasant, the Roughneck's hostility and disdain were clearly observable. Sometimes he might attempt to put up a veneer of respect, but it was thin and was not accepted as sincere by the authority....

Community members were not aware of the transgressions of the Saints. Even if the Saints had been less discreet, their favorite delinquencies would have been perceived as less serious than those of the Roughnecks.

In the eyes of the police and school officials, a boy who drinks in an alley and stands intoxicated on the street corner is committing a more serious offense than is a boy who drinks to inebriation in a nightclub or a tavern and drives around afterwards in a car. Similarly, a boy who steals a wallet from a store will be viewed as having committed a more serious offense than a boy who steals a lantern from a construction site.

Perceptual bias also operates with respect to the demeanor of the boys in the two groups when they are confronted by adults. It is not simply that adults dislike the posture affected by boys of the Roughneck ilk; more important is the conviction that the posture adopted by the Roughnecks is an indication of their devotion and commitment to deviance as a way of life. The posture becomes a cue, just as the type of the offense is a cue, to the degree to which the known transgressions are indicators of the youths' potential for other problems.

Visibility, demeanor and bias are surface variables which explain the day-to-day operations of the police. Why do these surface variables operate as they do? Why did the police choose to disregard the Saints' delinquencies while breathing down the backs of the Roughnecks?

The answer lies in the class structure of American society and the control of legal institutions by those at the top of the class structure. Obviously, no representative of the upper class drew up the operational chart for the police which led them to look in the ghettoes and on street corners—which led them to see the demeanor of lower-class youth as

troublesome and that of upper- middle-class youth as tolerable. Rather, the procedures simply developed from experience—experience with irate and influential upper-middle-class parents insisting that their son's vandalism was simply a prank and his drunkenness only a momentary "sowing of wild oats" —experience with cooperative or indifferent, powerless, lower-class parents who acquiesced to the laws' definition of their son's behavior.

Adult Careers of the Saints and the Roughnecks

The community's confidence in the potential of the Saints and the Roughnecks apparently was justified. If anything, the community members underestimated the degree to which these youngsters would turn out "good" or "bad."

Seven of the eight members of the Saints went on to college immediately after high school. Five of the boys graduated from college in four years. The sixth one finished college after two years in the army, and the seventh spent four years in the air force before returning to college and receiving a B.A. degree. Of these seven college graduates, three went on for advanced degrees. One finished law school and is now active in state politics, one finished medical school and is practicing near Hanibal, and one boy is now working for a Ph.D. The other four college graduates entered submanagerial, managerial or executive training positions with larger firms....

Some of the Roughnecks have lived up to community expectations. A number of them were headed for trouble. A few were not.

Jack and Herb were the athletes among the Roughnecks and their athletic prowess paid off handsomely. Both boys received unsolicited athletic scholarships to college.

Jack ... entered college in the fall and played four years of football. He and Herb graduated in four years, and both are teaching and coaching in high schools. They are married and have stable families....

Two of the boys never finished high school. Tommy left at the end of his junior year and went to another state. That summer he was arrested and placed on probation on a manslaughter charge. Three years later he was arrested for murder; he pleaded guilty to second degree murder and is serving a 30-year sentence in the state penitentiary.

Al, the other boy who did not finish high school, also left the state in his senior year. He is serving a life sentence in a state penitentiary for first degree murder.

Wes is a small-time gambler. He finished high school and "bummed around." After several years he made contact with a bookmaker who employed him as a runner. Later he acquired his own area and has been working it ever since, almost identical.

That leaves only Ron. Some of his former friends reported that they had heard he was "driving a truck up north," but no one could provide any concrete information.

Reinforcement

The community responded to the Roughnecks as boys in trouble, and the boys agreed with that perception. Their pattern of deviancy was reinforced, and breaking away from it became increasingly unlikely. Once the boys acquired an image of themselves as deviants, they selected new friends who affirmed that self-image. As that self-conception became more firmly entrenched, they also became willing to try new and more extreme deviances. With their growing alienation came freer expression of disrespect and hostility for representatives of the legitimate society. This disrespect increased the community's negativism, perpetuating the entire process of commitment to deviance. Lack of a commitment to deviance works the same way. In either case, the process will perpetuate itself unless some event (like a scholarship to college or a sudden failure) external to the established relationship intervenes. For two of the Roughnecks (Herb and Jack), receiving college athletic scholarships created new relations and culminated in a break with the established pattern of deviance....

Selective perception and labelling—finding, processing and punishing some kinds of criminality and not others—means that visible, poor, nonmobile, outspoken, undiplomatic "tough" kids will be noticed, whether their actions are seriously delinquent or not. Other kids, who have established a reputation for being bright (even though underachieving), disciplined and involved in respectable activities, who are mobile and monied, will be invisible when they deviate from sanctioned activities. They'll sow their wild oats—perhaps even wider and thicker than their lower-class cohorts—but they won't be noticed. When it's time to leave adolescence most will follow the expected path, settling into the ways of the middle class, remembering fondly the delinquent but unnoticed fling of their youth. The Roughnecks and others like them may turn around, too. It is more likely that their noticeable deviance will have been so reinforced by police and community that their lives will be effectively channeled into careers consistent with their adolescent background.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think that Chambliss called one group "the Saints" and the other group "the Roughnecks"? How were they different, and how were they similar?
2. When you were in high school, were different groups of kids given different labels? How did this reflect their behavior—how they acted and dressed? But how also might this have reflected how other students wished to perceive and treat them? Did these labels matter in your school?
3. Deterrence theory (see Part X) argues that making crime pay—punishing offenders—can reduce future criminal conduct. Chambliss would disagree. According to Chambliss, why were police actions against the Roughnecks ineffective, causing these youths, if anything, to become more wayward?
4. Based on your reading of this essay, what do you think Chambliss would favor as the best strategy to reduce delinquency, especially among disadvantaged youths?

19.
Crime, Shame, and Reintegration*

John Braithwaite

Braithwaite's central thesis is that crime is higher when shaming is stigmatizing and lower when shaming is reintegrative. This thesis explains both why some societies have higher rates of crime than others and why some individuals are more likely to offend than others.

At the macro level, Braithwaite starts with assumptions that mirror social disorganization theory: societies marked by urbanization and residential mobility are less "communitarian" and less likely to have interdependency between their citizens. When societies lack communitarianism—that is, when individuals are not "densely enmeshed in interdependencies which have the special qualities of mutuality and trust" (1989: 100)—they will engage in shaming that is stigmatizing. As large numbers of people are stigmatized, they come together to develop ongoing criminal subcultural groups that provide learning environments for crime and "illegitimate opportunities to indulge tastes." At any given time, stigmatized individuals have incentives to participate in these ongoing subcultural groups because they are excluded from conventional society. Furthermore, the process of stigmatization has a feedback effect that erodes communitarianism. The end result is a society—such as the United States—that has a high crime rate.

On the micro level, stigmatizing shaming has its greatest negative effects on individuals with few social bonds to conventional society—especially young, unmarried, unemployed males. Lacking interdependencies that might blunt stigma and foster reintegration, these rejected individuals have their social bonds further attenuated. As controls weaken, they join criminal subcultural groups in which antisocial values are reinforced and illegitimate opportunities are made available. In short, stigmatizing shaming evokes the conditions that control theory and differential association theory link to crime. The result is the continued, if not heightened, involvement of the individual offender in criminal activities.

Unlike labeling theorists, Braithwaite does not suggest that nonintervention is the most effective criminal justice policy. In fact, he believes that shaming is necessary for social control: the offender and the larger community benefit from a public ceremony in which the criminal act—but not the criminal—is defined as immoral. This moralizing is also done informally by those in the offender's social networks. The key issue is what follows shaming: reintegration or stigmatization. Reintegration is essential because shamed individuals are at a turning point in their lives—a time when they can reattach to conventional society or deepen their commitment to crime. When quality social relations exist, they provide the means through which offenders are given the forgiveness and support needed to become members of the community.

Within the United States and elsewhere, "restorative justice" programs most closely mirror Braithwaite's admonition to meld shaming with reintegration (see Braithwaite, 2002). In these programs, the goal is to "restore" both the victim, who has been harmed, and the offender, who has done the harming. Victims are likely to receive both restitution and, after conveying to the offender in a face-to-face encounter the pains they have experienced, a

public apology. Repentant offenders potentially are granted a measure of forgiveness by victims and are reaccepted by family and community.

Such attempts at shaming and reintegration present an appealing alternative to stigmatizing criminal justice sanctions (see Braithwaite and Mugford, 1994; Makkai and Braithwaite, 1994). Evaluations of restorative justice programs have yielded some promising results (Braithwaite, 2002, 2020; Menkel-Medow, 2007). It remains to be demonstrated, however, that these interventions have the capacity to alter the life course of persistent offenders. The critical issue, it would seem, is not the public ceremony or conference in which shaming occurs but the quality of the reintegration that follows. Unless these efforts at reintegration are prolonged and target for change the known predictors of recidivism, the reform of offenders is likely to be modest at best (see Levrant et al., 1999; more generally, see Bonta and Andrews, 2017).

References

Bonta, James and D. A. Andrews. 2017. *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*, 6th edition. New York: Routledge.

Braithwaite, John. 1989. *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

____. 2002. *Restorative Justice and Responsive Regulation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

____. 2020. "Restorative Justice and Reintegrative Shaming." In Cecilia Chouhy, Joshua C. Cochran, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (eds.), *Criminal Justice Theory: Explanations and Effects—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **26**, pp. 281–308. New York: Routledge.

Braithwaite, John and Stephen Mugford. 1994. "Conditions of Successful Reintegration Ceremonies: Dealing with Juvenile Offenders." *British Journal of Sociology* **34**: 139–171.

Levrant, Sharon, Francis T. Cullen, Betsy Fulton, and John F. Wozniak. 1999. "Reconsidering Restorative Justice: The Corruption of Benevolence Revisited?" *Crime and Delinquency* **45**: 3–27.

Makkai, Tony and John Braithwaite. 1994. "Reintegrative Shaming and Compliance with Regulatory Standards." *Criminology* **32**: 361–386.

Menkel-Medow, Carrie. 2007. "Restorative Justice: What Is It and Does It Work?" *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* **3**: 161–187.

The theory in this book suggests that the key to crime control is cultural commitments to shaming in ways that I call reintegrative. Societies with low crime rates are those that shame potently and judiciously; individuals who resort to crime are those insulated from shame over their wrongdoing. However, shame can be applied injudiciously and counterproductively; the theory seeks to specify the types of shaming which cause rather than prevent crime.…

The first step to productive theorizing about crime is to think about the contention that labeling offenders makes things worse. The contention is both right and wrong. The theory of reintegrative shaming is an attempt to specify when it is right and when wrong. The distinction is between shaming that leads to stigmatization—to outcasting, to confirmation of a deviant master status—versus shaming that is reintegrative, that shames while maintaining bonds of respect or love, that sharply terminates disapproval with forgiveness, instead of amplifying deviance by progressively casting the deviant out. Reintegrative shaming controls crime; stigmatization pushes offenders toward criminal subcultures.…

The theory of reintegrative shaming posits that the consequence of stigmatization is attraction to criminal subcultures. Subcultures supply the outcast offender with the opportunity to reject her rejectors, thereby maintaining a form of self-respect. In contrast, the consequence of reintegrative shaming is that criminal subcultures appear less attractive to the offender. Shaming is the most potent weapon of social control unless it shades into

stigmatization. Formal criminal punishment is an ineffective weapon of social control party because it is a degradation ceremony with maximum prospects for stigmatization.

The nub of the theory of reintegrative shaming is therefore about the effectiveness of reintegrative shaming and the counterproductivity of stigmatization in controlling crime. In addition, the theory posits a number of conditions that make for effective shaming. Individuals are more susceptible to shaming when they are enmeshed in multiple relationships of interdependency; societies shame more effectively when they are communitarian. Variables like urbanization and residential mobility predict communitarianism, while variables like age and gender predict individual interdependency. (A schematic summary of these aspects of the theory is presented in Figure 19.1.)

Some of the ways that the theory of reintegrative shaming builds on earlier theories should now be clear. Interdependency is the stuff of control theory; stigmatization comes from labeling theory; subculture formation is accounted for in opportunity theory terms; subcultural influences are naturally in the realm of subcultural theory; and the whole theory can be understood in integrative cognitive social learning theory terms such as are provided by differential association....

---

* Reprinted from John Braithwaite, *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*. Copyright © 1989 by Cambridge University Press, reproduced with permission.

Preventing Crime

We have seen that the micro process of shaming an individual has consequences far beyond the life of that individual. The social process of gossip links a micro incident into a macro pattern. A shaming incident reinforces cultural patterns which underwrite further cultural products like a moralistic children's story, a television program, a school teacher's homily. The latter modalities of public (societal) shaming exert pressure for further private (individual) shaming.

The reasons why reintegrative shaming works in preventing crime might be summarized as follows:

1. The deterrence literature suggests that specific deterrence associated with detection for criminal offending works primarily through fear of shame in the eyes of intimates rather than fear of formal punishment.
2. Shame not only specifically deters the shamed offender, it also generally deters many others who also wish to avoid shame and who participate in or become aware of the incident of shaming.
3. Both the specific and general deterrent effects of shame will be greater for persons who remain strongly attached in relationships of interdependency and affection because such persons will accrue greater interpersonal costs from shame. This is one reason why reintegrative shaming makes for more effective social control than stigmatization.
4. A second reason for the superiority of reintegrative shaming over stigmatization is that the latter can be counterproductive by breaking attachments to those who might shame future criminality and by increasing the attractiveness of groups that provide social support for crime.
5. However, most compliance with the law is not achieved through either specific or general deterrence. Most of us comply with the law most of the time, not because we rationally weigh our fear of the consequences of detection against the benefits of the crime, but because to commit the crime is simply unthinkable to us. Shaming is the social process which leads to the cognition that a particular type of crime is unthinkable. Cultures where the social process of shaming is muted are cultures where citizens often do not internalize abhorrence for crime.
6. A third reason for the superiority of the reintegrative shaming over stigmatization is that a combination of shame at and repentance by the offender is a more powerful affirmation of the criminal law than one-sided moralizing. A shaming ceremony followed later by a forgiveness and repentance ceremony more potently builds commitment to the law than a shaming ceremony alone. Nothing has greater symbolic force in community-wide conscience-building than repentance.
7. Because shaming is a participatory form of social control, compared with formal sanctioning which is more professionalized than participatory, shaming builds consciences through citizens being instruments as well as targets of social control. Participation in expressions of abhorrence toward the criminal acts of others is part of what makes crime an abhorrent choice for ourselves to make.
8. Once consciences have been formed by cultural processes of shaming and repentance, pangs of conscience become the most effective punishment for crime because whereas conscience delivers a timely anxiety response to every involvement in crime, other negative reinforcers, including shame, are delivered unreliably or with delay.

9. Shaming is therefore both the social process which builds consciences, and the most important backstop to be used when consciences fail to deliver conformity. Formal punishment is another backstop, but a less effective one than reintegrative shaming.
10. Gossip within wider circles of acquaintances and shaming of offenders not even known to those who gossip are important for building consciences because so many crimes will not occur in the direct experiences of limited groups like families. Societal incidents of shaming remind parents and teachers of the need to moralize with their children across the whole curriculum of crimes.
11. Public shaming puts pressure on parents, teachers and others to ensure that they engage in private shaming which is sufficiently systematic, and public shaming increasingly takes over the role of private shaming once children move away from the influence of the family and school. The latter is one reason why public shaming by courts of law has a more important role to play with strictly adult offenses like crimes against the environment than with predominantly juvenile offenses like vandalism.
12. Public shaming generalizes familiar principles to unfamiliar or new contexts. It integrates new categories of wrongdoing, which may arise from technological change into pre-existing moral frameworks. Public shaming transforms the loss of life in a battle at My Lai into a “war crime” and a “massacre,” and through our distant involvement in the incident of shaming, the moral category of illegal killing acquires some expanded meanings.
13. Cultures with heavy emphasis on reintegrative shaming establish a smoother transition between socialization practices in the family and socialization in the wider society. Within the family, as the child grows, social control shifts from external to internal controls; punishment-oriented cultures set this process more starkly in reverse in the public domain than do shame-oriented cultures. To the extent that crime control can be made to work by continuing to catalyze internal controls it will be more effective; this is precisely why families are more effective agents of social control than police forces.
14. Gossip and other modalities of shaming can be especially effective when the targets of shame are not directly confronted with the shame, but are directly confronted with gestures of forgiveness or reintegration. Citizens who have learnt the culture do not have to be shamed to their faces to know that they are the subject of gossip, but they may need to be directly offered gestures of acceptance before they can be confident that they are again part of the community of law-abiding citizens. In other words, shaming which is excessively confrontational renders the achievement of reintegration a tall order. There is thus something to be said for hypocrisy: our friends are likely to recover from a suspicion that we have stabbed them in the back, but stabbing them in the front can be divisive!
15. The effectiveness of shaming is often enhanced by shame being directed not only at the individual offender but also at her family, or her company if she is a corporate criminal. When a collectivity as well as an individual is shamed, collectivities are put on notice as to their responsibility to exercise informal control over their members, and the moralizing impact of shaming is multiplied. For reasons which will be elaborated in the next chapter, a shamed family or company will often transmit the shame to the individual offender in a manner which is as regenerative as possible. From the standpoint of the offender, the strategy of rejecting her rejectors may resuscitate her own self-esteem, but her loved ones or colleagues will soon let her know that sinking deeper into the deviant role will only exacerbate the shame they are suffering on her behalf.

The Theory of Reintegrative Shaming

Figure 19.1 provides a schematic summary of the theory. In the first part of this chapter clear definitions are attempted for the key concepts in Figure 19.1. The cluster of six variables around interdependency at the top left of Figure 19.1 are characteristics of individuals; the three at the top right are characteristics of societies; while high levels of crime and shaming are variables which apply to both individuals and societies. The theory as summarized in Figure 19.1 thus gives an account both of why some kinds of individuals and some kinds of societies exhibit more crime.

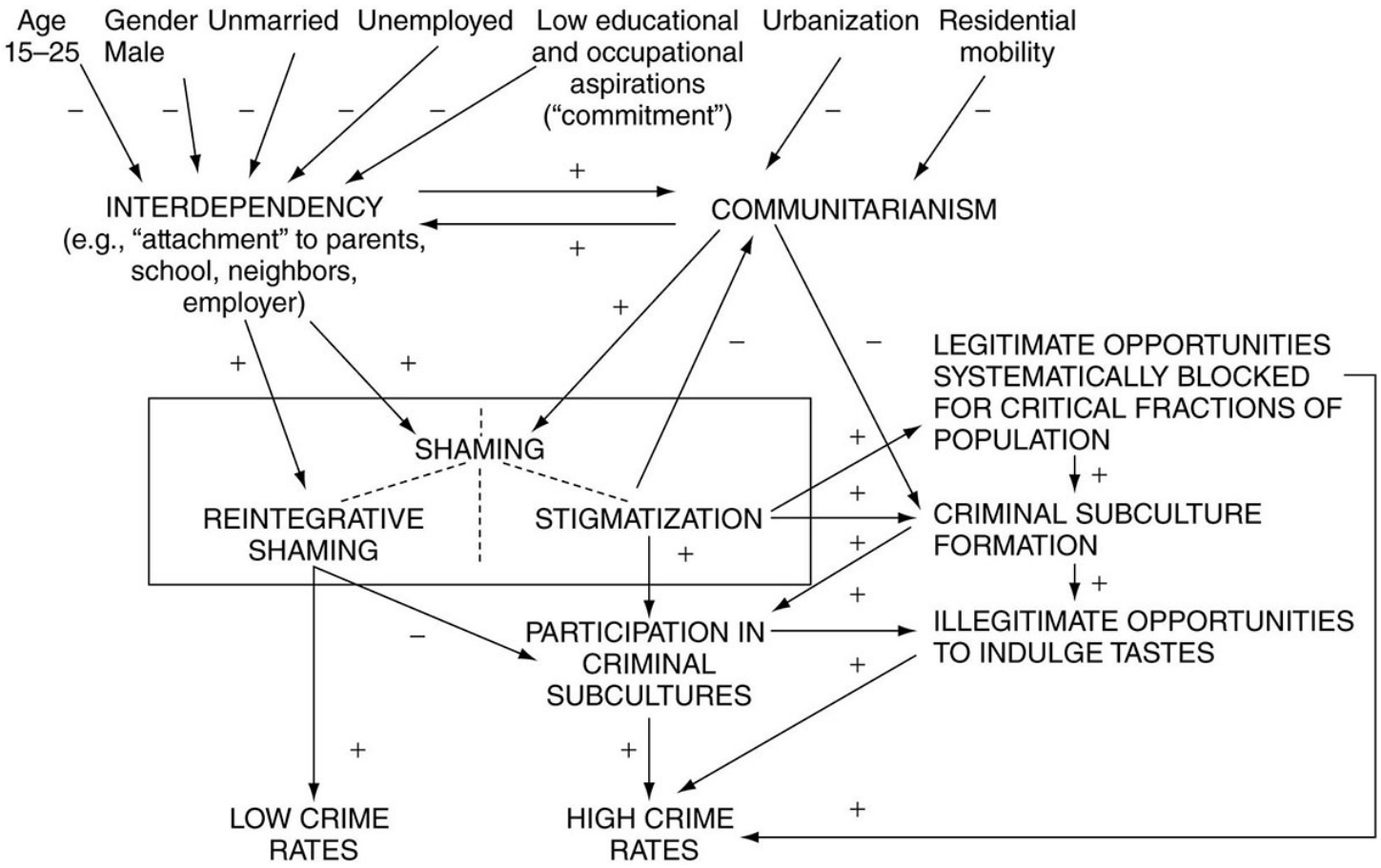


FIGURE 19.1 **Summary of the Theory of Reintegrative Shaming**

We could get a more parsimonious theory by collapsing the similar constructs of interdependency (an individual-level variable) and communitarianism (a societal variable) into a single construct, but then we would no longer have a framework to predict both which individuals and which societies will have more crime. On the desirability of being able to do this I can only agree with Cressey:

> A theory explaining social behavior in general, or any specific kind of social behavior, should have two distinct but consistent aspects. First, there must be a statement that explains the statistical distribution of the behavior in time and space (epidemiology), and from which predictive statements about unknown statistical distributions can be derived. Second, there must be a statement that identifies, at least by implication, the process by which individuals come to exhibit the behavior in question, and from which can be derived predictive statements about the behavior of individuals. (Cressey, 1960:47)

Key Concepts

Interdependency is a condition of individuals. It means the extent to which individuals participate in networks wherein they are dependent on others to achieve valued ends and others are dependent on them. We could describe an individual as in a state of interdependency even if the individuals who are dependent on him are different from the individuals on whom he is dependent. Interdependency is approximately equivalent to the social bonding, attachment and commitment of control theory.

Communitarianism is a condition of societies. In communitarian societies individuals are densely enmeshed in interdependencies which have the special qualities of mutual help and trust. The interdependencies have symbolic significance in the culture of group loyalties which take precedence over individual interests. The interdependencies also have symbolic significance as attachments which invoke personal obligation to others in a community of concern, rather than simply interdependencies of convenience as between a bank and a small depositor. A communitarian culture rejects any pejorative connotation of dependency as threatening individual autonomy. Communitarian cultures resist interpretations of dependency as weakness and emphasize the need for mutuality of obligation in interdependency (to be both dependent and dependable). The Japanese are said to be socialized not only to *amaeru* (to be succored by others) but also to *amayakasu* (to be nurturing to others) (Wagatsuma and Rosett, 1986).

Shaming means all social processes of expressing disapproval which have the intention or effect of invoking remorse in the person being shamed and/or condemnation by others who become aware of the shaming. When associated with appropriate symbols, formal punishment often shames. But societies vary enormously in the extent to which formal punishment is associated with shaming or in the extent to which the social meaning of punishment is no more than to inflict pain to tip reward-cost calculations in favor of certain outcomes. Shaming, unlike purely deterrent punishment, sets out to moralize with the offender to communicate reasons for the evil of her actions. Most shaming is neither associated with formal punishment nor perpetrated by the state, though both shaming by the state and shaming with punishment are important types of shaming. Most shaming is by individuals within interdependent communities of concern.

Reintegrative shaming is shaming which is followed by efforts to reintegrate the offender back into the community of law-abiding or respectable citizens through words or gestures of forgiveness or ceremonies to decertify the offender as deviant. Shaming and reintegration do not occur simultaneously but sequentially, with reintegration occurring before deviance becomes a master status. It is shaming which labels the act as evil while striving to preserve the identity of the offender as essentially good. It is directed at signifying evil deeds rather than evil persons in the Christian tradition of "hate the sin and love the sinner." Specific disapproval is expressed within relationships characterized by general social approval; shaming criminal behavior is complemented by ongoing social rewarding of alternative behavior patterns. Reintegrative shaming is not necessarily weak; it can be cruel, even vicious. It is not distinguished from stigmatization by its potency, but by (a) a finite rather than open-ended duration which is terminated by forgiveness; and by (b) efforts to maintain bonds of love or respect throughout the finite period of suffering shame.

Stigmatization is disintegrative shaming in which no effort is made to reconcile the offender with the community. The offender is outcast, her deviance is allowed to become a master status, degradation ceremonies are not followed by ceremonies to decertify deviance.

Criminal subcultures are sets of rationalizations and conduct norms which cluster together to support criminal behavior. The clustering is usually facilitated by subcultural groups which provide systematic social support for crime

in any of a number of ways—supplying members with criminal opportunities, criminal values, attitudes which weaken conventional values of law-abidingness, or techniques of neutralizing conventional values.

Short Summary of the Theory

The following might serve as the briefest possible summary of the theory. A variety of life circumstances increase the chances that individuals will be in situations of greater interdependency, the most important being age (under 15 and over 25), being married, female, employed, and having high employment and educational aspirations. Interdependent persons are more susceptible to shaming. More importantly, societies in which individuals are subject to extensive interdependencies are more likely to be communitarian, and shaming is much more widespread and potent in communitarian societies. Urbanization and high residential mobility are societal characteristics which undermine communitarianism.

The shaming produced by interdependency and communitarianism can be either of two types—shaming that becomes stigmatization or shaming that is followed by reintegration. The shaming engendered is more likely to become reintegrative in societies that are communitarian. In societies where shaming does become reintegrative, low crime rates are the result because disapproval is dispensed without eliciting a rejection of the disapprovers, so that the potentialities for future disapproval are not dismantled. Moreover, reintegrative shaming is superior even to stigmatization for conscience-building....

Shaming that is stigmatizing, in contrast, makes criminal subcultures more attractive because these are in some sense subcultures which reject the rejectors. Thus, when shaming is allowed to become stigmatization for want of reintegrative gestures or ceremonies which decertify deviance, the deviant is both attracted to criminal subcultures and cut off from other interdependencies (with family, neighbors, church, etc.). Participation in subcultural groups supplies criminal role models, training in techniques of crime and techniques of neutralizing crime (or other forms of social support) that make choices to engage in crime more attractive. Thus, to the extent that shaming is of the stigmatizing rather than the reintegrative sort, and that criminal subcultures are widespread and accessible in the society, higher crime rates will be the result. While societies characterized by high levels of stigmatization will have higher crime rates than societies characterized by reintegrative shaming, the former will have higher or lower crime rates than societies with little shaming at all depending largely on the availability of criminal subcultures.

Yet a high level of stigmatization in the society is one of the very factors that encourages criminal subculture formation by creating populations of outcasts with no stake in conformity, no chance of self-esteem within the terms of conventional society—individuals in search of an alternative culture that allows them self-esteem. A communitarian culture, on the other hand, nurtures deviants within a network of attachments to conventional society, thus inhibiting the widespread outcasting that is the stuff of subculture formation.

For clarity of exposition the two types of shaming have been presented as a stark dichotomy. In reality, for any society some deviants are dealt with in ways that are more stigmatic while others receive more reintegrative shaming. Indeed, a single deviant will be responded to more stigmatically by some, more reintegratively by others. To the extent that the greater weight of shaming tends to stigmatization, the crime-producing processes on the right of Figure 19.1 are more likely to be triggered; to the extent that the balance of shaming tips toward reintegration, informal processes of crime control are more likely to prevail over these crime-producing processes.

The other major societal variable which fosters criminal subculture formation is systematic blockage of legitimate opportunities for critical fractions of the population. If black slum dwellers are systematically denied economic opportunities because of the stigma of their race and neighborhood, then criminal subcultures will form in these

outcast neighborhoods. It can be seen that stigmatization (as opposed to social integration) as a cultural disposition may contribute to the systematic blockage of these economic opportunities; but cultural variables like stigmatization will be of rather minor importance compared with structural economic variables in determining opportunities. I have argued that the blockages in this part of the theory are not restricted to closed opportunities to climb out of poverty; systematically blocked opportunities for ever greater wealth accumulation by the most affluent of corporations often lead to corporate criminal subculture formation....

Criminal subcultures are the main mechanism for constituting illegitimate opportunity structures—knowledge on how to offend, social support for offending or communication of rationalizations for offending, criminal role models, subcultural groups which assist with the avoidance of detection and which organize collective criminal enterprises. However, illegitimate opportunities are greater in some societies than others for a variety of further reasons which are not incorporated within the theory. While the effects of legitimate and illegitimate opportunities on crime are mostly mediated by participation in criminal subcultures, the blockage of legitimate opportunities combined with the availability of illegitimate opportunities can independently increase crime. Whether illegitimate opportunities to engage in crime are supplied by participation in criminal subcultures or otherwise, they must be opportunities that appeal to the tastes of tempted individuals for them to result in crime.

This summary is crudely simple because it ignores what goes on within the shaming box in Figure 19.1. That is, it ignores the treatment ... of the social processes that combine individual acts of shaming into cultural processes of shaming which are more or less integrative: gossip, media coverage of shaming incidents, children's stories, etc. In turn, the summary has neglected how these macro processes of shaming feed back to ensure that micro practices of shaming cover the curriculum of crimes....

Shunting the Colliding Locomotives of Criminological Theory

This sharp contrast with the inability of the existing dominant theories to explain much of what we know about crime is achieved, ironically, through the addition of just one element—the partitioning of shaming—as a shunt to connect these diverging theoretical tracks. Through putting the old theoretical ingredients together in a new way, we can do better at accounting for the facts than can any of these traditions separately. Moreover, we can do better compared with adding together their separate (contradictory!) elements as partial explanations within an atheoretical multi-factor model.

The top left of Figure 19.1 incorporates the key variables of control theory; the far right—opportunity theory; the middle and bottom right—subcultural theory; the bottom, particularly the bottom left—learning theory; the right side of the middle box—labeling theory. With one crucial exception (reintegrative shaming), there is therefore no originality in the elements of this theory, simply originality of synthesis.

Through the effect of interdependency in reducing crime, we can capture the explanatory successes of control theory in accounting for primary deviance. Through shunting stigmatization away from other forms of shaming (as that sort of shaming which triggers subcultural participation) we proffer a more promising approach to the explanation of secondary deviance in labeling and subcultural theory terms. We achieve a more specified theory of differential association with conventional others versus others who share a subculture. Conceived another way, it is a theory of differential shaming. Most shaming is by conventional others on the anti-criminal side of a tipping point. When stigmatization produces secondary deviance, it is because the balance of shame has tipped; for those who share the subculture there is sufficient approval for crime ... to outweigh the shaming of conventional society.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between shaming that is stigmatizing and shaming that is reintegrative?
2. In the United States, what kind of shaming is most common? Can you provide some examples?
3. Why does stigmatizing shaming cause crime? How does this relate to labeling theory?
4. If you were going to develop a reintegrative shaming program for juvenile delinquents, what would it involve?

20.
Making Good*

Shadd Maruna

In the latter part of the 1990s, Shadd Maruna served as the co-principal investigator of the Liverpool Desistance Study (LDS). This project involved interviews with 65 persistent offenders (55 men, 10 women). Eventually, based on the LDS interviews, Maruna was able to distinguish 30 subjects who were desisting from crime and 20 who were continuing in crime (the other 15 were in-between). These two groups were matched and thus similar on background characteristics related to recidivism, such as age, criminal history, and onset of offending. Importantly, observed Maruna (2001: 49), these factors "provide little understanding about how desistance occurs." In fact, given that they had been career criminals, it was puzzling why the desisters had decided to stop offending and were now "making good" and trying to create "new lives for themselves" (pp. 6–7).

As will be seen in Part XIII, criminologists have paid a lot of attention to why desistance occurs. One popular explanation is that as offenders get older, they simply age out of crime—just as they may age out of playing basketball. Another important viewpoint is that key events—such as a good marriage or a good job—are turning points that cause offenders to pivot away from criminal pursuits (see Sampson and Laub, 1993). From his interviews, however, Maruna was persuaded that another factor was important in differentiating between persisters and desisters: what offenders thought about themselves and their future.

Labeling theory had called attention to how stigmatization caused offenders to internalize a criminal identity, which in turn helped to stabilize their waywardness. Maruna saw identity not as fixed but as dynamic or changeable. Building on the work of McAdams (2001), he conceptualized identity not simply as a narrow self-concept ("I am a thief") but as a self-story or narrative that people told about who they were and why they acted as they did. He discovered that those who persisted in crime had a particular kind of narrative identity, which he called a "condemnation script." These offenders believed that they were "doomed to deviance"—that they were so embedded in crime and in dire economic circumstances that they had no choice but to continue offending (Maruna, 2001 : 74).

Unlike traditional labeling theory, however, Maruna identified a different narrative identity—which he called a "redemption script"—that allowed offenders to escape a criminal career. In this story, offenders claimed that despite years of breaking the law, "deep down they were good people" and that being a criminal was not the "real me" (Maruna, 2001 : 88–89). They manifested optimism that they would now control their lives and overcome the obstacles they still faced. And they pursued a higher purpose in life, often seeing their past criminal involvement as enabling them to counsel others at risk of entering or already trapped in a criminal life course. Their previously wasted life could now be put to good use.

Notably, Maruna has argued that some official means should be developed to recognize redemption and to allow offenders to move beyond their stigmatized status as ex-offenders. He has discussed ideas such as "judicial rehabilitation" and "redemptions" or "reentry rituals" (Maruna, 2001, 2011a, b). Just as the court publicly announces convictions of defendants, so too could courts or some other community body announce that offenders

who had served their time, stayed crime-free, and done good works were now rehabilitated and could be given a moral "clean bill of health" (2011a). "Not only must a person accept conventional society in order to go straight," cautions Maruna (2001: 155), "but conventional society must accept that person as well"(see Cullen et al., 2020). Notably, opinion surveys show that the public believes in offender redeemability and supports the use of rehabilitation ceremonies (Butler et al., 2020).

References

Butler, Leah C., Francis T. Cullen, Alexander L. Burton, Angela J. Thielo, and Velmer S. Burton, Jr. 2020. "Redemption at a Correctional Turning Point: Public Support for Rehabilitation Ceremonies." *Federal Probation* **84** (1): 38–47.

Cullen, Francis T., Heejin Lee, Leah C. Butler, and Angela J. Thielo. 2020. "Rehabilitation and Redemption: Building a New Corrections." In Cecilia Chouhy, Joshua C. Cochran, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (eds.), *Criminal Justice Theory: Explanations and Effects—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **26**, pp. 309–335. New York: Routledge.

Maruna, Shadd. 2001. *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

____. 2011a. "Judicial Rehabilitation and the 'Clean Bill of Health' in Criminal Justice." *European Journal of Probation* **3**: 97–117.

____. 2011b. "Reentry as a Rite of Passage." *Punishment and Society* **13**: 3–28.

McAdams, Dan P. 2001. "The Psychology of Life Stories." *Review of General Psychology* **5**: 100–122.

Sampson, Robert J. and John H. Laub. 1993. *Crime in the Making: Pathways and Turning Points Through Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

I am interested in "false positives"—people who "should" commit crime, according to common wisdom and our best predictive calculations, but do not.... I outline the beginnings of a new understanding of *desistance* from crime—the process by which stigmatized, former offenders are able to "make good" and create new lives for themselves. This analysis is largely based on the findings of the Liverpool Desistance Study (LDS), a qualitative investigation of desistance that involved long-term field observations and hundreds of casual and in-depth interviews with British ex-convicts between 1996 and 1998....

The premise ... is that to successfully maintain this abstinence from crime, ex-offenders need to *make sense* of their lives. This sense-making commonly takes the form of a life story or self-narrative (McAdams, 1985, 1993; Sampson and Laub, 1995). "Individuals confront ambiguity, change, and contradictions throughout their lives, (and) constructing a coherent personal narrative on sometimes disorderly lives is one of the dominant struggles that life-course research has uncovered" (Sampson and Laub, 1995, p. 156)....

Therefore, I argue that to desist from crime, ex-offenders need to develop a coherent, prosocial identity for themselves. As such, they need to account for and understand their criminal pasts (why they did what they did), and they also need to understand why they are now "not like that anymore." Ex-offenders need a coherent and credible self-story to explain (to themselves and others) how their checkered pasts could have led to their new, reformed identities. Lofland (1969) called this the "question of congruence." ...

They recast their criminal pasts not as the shameful failings that they are but instead as the necessary prelude to some newfound calling. In general, the highly positive accounts bore almost no resemblance to the ugly realities of the ex-offenders' lives (as one understands them in criminological research)....

I describe this process of willful, cognitive distortion as “making good.” To make good is to find reason and purpose in the bleakest of life histories (cf. Frankl, 1984; Taylor, 1983)....

By “making good,” not only is the desisting ex-offender “changed,” but he or she is also reconstituted. As with first becoming deviant, “the former identity stands as accidental; the new identity is the basic reality. What he is now is what, after all, he was all along” (Garfinkel, 1956, pp. 421–422). Creating this sense of order out of disorderly lives may be of particular importance to those who are trying to maintain an important life change such as desisting from crime....

---

* Copyright ©2011 by American Psychological Association. Adapted with permission. Maruna, Shadd. *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives*. pages 6–9, 73–75, 83–85, 87–91, 95, 97–100, 103–104, 155–158.

Condemnation Scripts

As easy as the money can be in the world of drugs and crime, this pursuit almost inevitably leads to imprisonment and renewed cycles of poverty and stigma. Although a first-time delinquent may overestimate his or her chances of escaping this fate, surely every inmate sitting in prison has started to guess that crime does not pay.

To understand how repeat offending makes sense in the face of such deterrence, one must understand the mind-set or self-perspective of the recidivist actor.... Bush (1995), in fact, suggested that almost all deviants share an "antisocial logic" or a "small set of cognitive habits that define their orientation toward life" (p. 144).

The basic structure of this logical self-narrative can be outlined by examining the life stories provided by participants in the Liverpool Desistance Study....

The long-term, persistent offenders in this sample generally said that they are sick of offending, sick of prison, and sick of their position in life. Several talked at length about wanting to go legit or at least doing something different with their lives (see also Burnett, 1992). Yet, they said that they feel powerless to change their behavior because of drug dependency, poverty, a lack of education or skills, or societal prejudice. They do not want to offend, they said, but feel that they have no choice....

I characterize the narrative of persistent offenders as a *condemnation script*. The condemned person in the story is the narrator (although he or she reserves plenty of condemnation and blame for society as well). Active offenders in this sample largely saw their life scripts as having been written for them a long time ago. In a description of "ontologies of the self," Hankiss (1981) called this a "self-absolutory" narrative strategy, in which a negative present follows linearly from a negative past....

Persistent offenders in this sample view themselves as victims of circumstance. They claim to have a clear picture of the "good life" but do not feel they have the ability to get there using their own volition. The only refuge they can imagine is found in a bottle or behind the wheel of a stolen sports car. In the words of the participant above, "going around a corner and seeing a brick wall there, you're bound to shit yourself, like, but at least you're feeling something. It's something" (male, age 26). It is not a happy narrative....

Persistent offenders, like people who are clinically depressed, might be "sadder but wiser" than their contemporaries who struggle to desist. The condemnation script the persistent offender constructs for him- or herself may or may not be an "accurate" assessment of reality, but it certainly conforms with societal wisdom about deviance, criminality, and the measure of a person's personal success....

Redemption Scripts

Unlike active offenders, the long-time, persistent offender who tries to desist from crime has a lot to explain. The participants in the Liverpool Desistance Study (LDS) each spent around a decade selling drugs, stealing cars, and sitting in prison. Most critically, they have made repeated breaks with the life of crime and drugs (often announcing their "reform" to authorities and significant others), only to return to offending behavior. No one (including the speaker himself or herself) is going to automatically believe such a person, when they announce, "I am a new person" or "I have changed my ways."

If such an enormous life transformation is to be believed, the person needs a coherent narrative to explain and justify this turnaround....

Although each story is of course unique, the self-narratives of the desisting sample feature a number of key plot devices with striking regularity. This indicates that a particular identity narrative may be the most personally and culturally persuasive, meaningful, and enabling for the person who is trying to desist. This section addresses how this recovery story (or *redemption script*) "works," by outlining the elements of this particular narrative that make it especially coherent and convincing by the standards of "narrative logic" (Bruner, 1987),

The redemption script begins by establishing the goodness and conventionality of the narrator—a victim of society who gets involved with crime and drugs to achieve some sort of power over otherwise bleak circumstances. This deviance eventually becomes its own trap, however, as the narrator becomes ensnared in the vicious cycle of crime and imprisonment. Yet, with the help of some outside force, someone who "believed in" the ex-offender, the narrator is able to accomplish what he or she was "always meant to do." Newly empowered, he or she now also seeks to "give something back" to society as a display of gratitude.

This process might be characterized as "making good." Rather than "knifing off" one's troubled past (e.g., Elder, 1998), this redemption script allows the person to rewrite a shameful past into a necessary prelude to a productive and worthy life. Although the personal agency implied in the "knifing off" concept remains, "making good" involves more self-reconstruction than amputation....

Thematically, the narratives that desisting interviewees make out of their lives differ from those of active offenders in three fundamental ways:

1. an establishment of the core beliefs that characterize the person's "true self"
2. an optimistic perception (some might say useful "illusion") of personal control over one's destiny
3. the desire to be productive and give something back to society, particularly the next generation....

The "Real Me"

Narrators in this sample carefully established their essential nature through personally significant foreshadowing episodes. Even when they were "at their worst," the desisting narrators emphasized that "deep down" they were good people. In a process with parallels to Braithwaite's (1989) restoration process, the ex-offenders look in their past to find some redeeming value and emphasize their "essential core of normalcy" (cf. Lofland, 1969, p. 214)....

The most common strategy, therefore, is to mine even deviant episodes in one's past for positive qualities. For instance, many narrators establish their "true self" as a heroic underdog who only did what needed to be done to help family and friends....

When describing their offending histories, almost all the desisting narrators frequently emphasized that they have "a good brain," "a good heart," or some other positive attributes. Even those who did admit to being "no bright spark" frequently emphasized their street smarts and understanding of how life works....

Making good, in this framework, is not seen as a matter of being resocialized or cured, but rather becomes a process of freeing one's "real me" from these external constraints or "finding the diamond in the rough." This process of self-discovery was frequently described in terms of empowerment from some outside source....

Tragic Optimism: Making "Good from the Bad"

In perhaps the most important manifestation of this positive outlook, former offenders tend to recast their lives as being "planned" or orchestrated by a higher power for a certain purpose....

In many ways, this resembles what Frankl (1984) called "tragic optimism," or the belief that suffering can be redemptive. In this case, however, the belief is that one's *mistakes* can make one a stronger person. In fact, for many, the only thing they do have "to show for themselves" after 10 years of involvement in criminal behavior is the wisdom they gained from spending this much time on and beyond "the edge." This experience, for whatever it is worth, is turned into a strength in the redemption script....

More typically, interviewees said, the experience of having "been there and back" has provided them with a sense of "street cred" (credibility among young people) or else an insight into life or how the world works. Ex-offenders say they have learned from their past lives, and this knowledge has made them wiser people....

While rarely this explicit, the underlying suggestion in many desisting narratives is that the person who experiences crime and then goes straight is in some ways morally superior to the person who has never experienced drug use or criminal behavior. The ex-offender, after all, has tasted the euphoria of easy money, drugs, and criminal domination and has still managed to renounce these pleasures and pursue a more productive lifestyle....

Finding One's Purpose

According to Lofland (1969), "Transformed deviants tend to become not merely moral but hypermoral.... They take on a relatively fervent moral purpose" (p. 283). The desisting participants in this sample indeed often claimed to have found a higher purpose and found fulfillment in "fighting the good fight" (male, age 30), defined differently by each narrator. For this Liverpool sample, this "moral purpose" often took the form of mutual-help movements or class-based identity politics. In a U.S. sample, ex-offenders may be more likely to turn to race- or faith-based social movements (e.g., Maruna, 1997). Regardless of the specific framework, ex-offenders who desist seem to find some larger cause that brings them a sense of purpose....

Each of us seeks to stave off meaninglessness and void by finding some life pursuit worthy of our time. As was outlined ... for the active offenders in this sample this fulfillment is largely sought in the "big score" and other experiential thrills. Desisting interviewees, on the other hand, expressed a desire for more lasting accomplishments

or “something to show” for themselves. They described newfound pleasures in creative and productive pursuits, and often expressed a special attachment or duty to some particular community, group, or cause….

Nonetheless, the impulse toward volunteerism and mentoring could be found in almost every narrative:

> Hopefully I’ll be a probation officer soon—or rather work in the probation service, not as a probation officer. I want to *give people my life*—you know, experiences—what I been through. You know, tell them what experiences they can have if they do what I done, basically. (male, age 31)

This urge to “give people my life” appears repeatedly in the interviews with desisting people, who use almost identical language in explaining this desire….

A lifetime that is deemed a “waste” or a shame can be “put to use” by saving one—“even just one”—other life from repeating the same mistakes. This cautionary story is intended in particular as a gift for the next generation.

> I was saying to [my brother’s] kids the other day. I’d sat both of them down the other day, and I said, “Listen, me and your dad have wasted our lives. I don’t want yous to do what we’ve done. For 15 or 16 years, me and your dad wasted our lives, and now we want you to take a leaf out of our book.” (male, age 33) …

The moral heroism of the redemption script “serves to make acceptable, explicable and even meritorious the guilt-laden, ‘wasted’ portions of an Actor’s life” (Lofland, 1969, p. 287). This reconstruction also allows the ex-offender to “unabashedly and proudly” announce his or her past, instead of having to run from it (Irwin, 1980, p, 94). Essentially, the desisting ex-offender has found a meaning in his or her otherwise shame-filled past….

Yet, this sense of optimism and self-efficacy might be useful for sustaining desistance. For all of its problems, being a criminal provides individuals with at least momentary escapes into excitement, power, and notoriety. If going straight means accepting docility, self-hatred, and stigma, there is little reason to desist from such escapes….

Recognizing Redemption

The most difficult obstacle ex-offenders face in the effort to make good is one that they have partially created for themselves. Ex-offenders zigzag between crime and noncrime, and they frequently make the claim that they are going straight "for sure this time, I really mean it," only to relapse into crime and drugs. Like the boy who cried wolf, the drifting deviant eventually loses credibility, even with himself or herself. Because employers, agents of social control, and other community members have little confidence in their own ability to discern between legitimate and illegitimate claims to personal reform, the safest option is to interpret any ex-offender's claim to going straight as "phony, feigning, unbelievable or implausible" (Lofland, 1969, p. 210). To do otherwise would be to "open oneself to the perceived possibility of being hurt, taken in, suckered, abused, put down or in some other way being made to seem a less-than-competent player of the social game" (p. 212).

Knowing this well, the LDS interviewees seemed almost obsessed with establishing the authenticity of their reform (see also Weinberg, 1996)....

Reformation is not something that is visible or objective in the sense it can be "proven." It is, instead, a construct that is negotiated through interaction between an individual and significant others in a process of "looking-glass rehabilitation." Until ex-offenders are formally and symbolically recognized as "success stories," their conversion may remain suspect to significant others, and most importantly to themselves. After all, only a few years ago, each participant had been officially and publicly labeled a "criminal" in the media and by social control authorities as high as judges.

> I would say that four years ago, the judge's comments, "You are a menace and a danger to society. Society should be protected from the likes of you," it didn't go down well. (male, age 28)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who were the subjects of Maruna's study? In this context, what does he mean by the concept of "making good"?
2. What is the difference between a condemnation script and a redemption script? What are the three main features of a narrative that make it a redemption script?
3. Although labeling theory has traditionally focused on the persistence of offending (or "secondary deviance"), Maruna's main interest is in explaining the opposite—desistance from crime. Why is having a coherent, positive identity—reflected in a redemption narrative—crucial to desistance and to offenders' making good in their lives?
4. What is your self-identity narrative? How does it shape your behavior? Do you think that students who fail in college might have a "condemnation script"? Does thinking positively about yourself and your future affect your choices?
5. In other writings, Maruna has argued that one way to recognize that offenders have changed is to conduct a "redemption" or "rehabilitation" ceremony. After being crime-free for several years and living a good life, a ceremony would be conducted that would officially proclaim them as rehabilitated and restore to them the full legal rights enjoyed by all regular citizens. Would you support holding redemption ceremonies? Why would a labeling theorist support this idea?

PART VII

CRITICAL CRIMINOLOGY: POWER, PEACE, AND CRIME

Francis T. Cullen
University of Cincinnati

Robert Agnew
Emory University

Pamela Wilcox
Pennsylvania State University

In the quarter century following World War II, notes James Patterson (1996: vii), Americans had "great expectations" about "the capacity of the United States to create a better world abroad and a happier society at home." These expectations reached a feverish pitch in the 1960s. With an economic boom under way and unprecedented support for broadening equal rights, President Lyndon Johnson called for the creation of a "great society"—a call that at the time did not seem naive. Scarcely a decade later, however, much of this optimism had turned to despair. Equal economic opportunity for all now seemed beyond reach, and racial cleavages—despite gains in formal legal rights for minorities—seemed to have widened, as urban riots and white resistance to integration made clear. Viet Nam, Kent State, Attica, and Watergate—together these events and many others revealed the abuse of state power in the pursuit of questionable, if not illegal, goals. The assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy and of Martin Luther King, Jr., leaders who preached hope and peace, were perhaps the most vivid and enduring reminders that achieving true social justice remained an American dream.

What lessons were to be drawn from the failure to achieve the "great expectations" for American society? For a generation of criminologists who grew up in these tumultuous times and whose campus days were spent in protest marches, their social world had been transformed. Their utopian belief in a just society and faith in the "system" had been replaced by the sobering realization that inequality was deeply entrenched and that those in power wished to reinforce, not change, the status quo. Once all the rhetoric about America being the "land of opportunity" had been dispelled, they learned that fundamental reform would require unmasking and challenging the structures of power and the forces that undergirded them.

Equipped with this vision, criminologists in the late 1960s and early 1970s found "traditional" theories of crime—such as those covered in the previous parts of this volume—intellectually sterile, if not unthinkingly dangerous. These theories seemed blind to the central reality of American society: its pervasive economic and racial inequality. Traditional perspectives largely ignored and thus left unchallenged the powerful interests that benefited from this inequality. As a result, crime was detached from the very structural forces that sustained the mean streets of inner-city neighborhoods and, it might be added, that gave rise to rapacious corporations.

In contrast, this generation of criminologists called for a "new criminology" that would take a "critical" stance toward society and, intellectually, toward the assumptions and content of traditional criminology (Krisberg, 1975; Taylor et al., 1973). The category of "critical criminology"—sometimes also called conflict, radical, or Marxian criminology—encompasses diverse lines of inquiry (see Bohm, 1982; Milovanovic, 1982; Thomas and O'Maolchatha, 1989). At the risk of missing the richness of theorizing within this approach, however, it is possible to identify several themes that make a theoretical work distinctively "critical" in its focus.

Central Themes of Critical Criminology

First, the concepts of inequality and power are integral to any understanding of crime and its control. Building on the work of Karl Marx, critical criminologists note that capitalism enriches some and impoverishes many, thus inevitably producing a wide economic gap between the social classes. Pursuing their own interests, the affluent use their money to ensure that government policies do not threaten their position of advantage. As a result, the state—including the criminal law and the criminal justice system—operates to legitimate and protect social arrangements that benefit those profiting from capitalism.

Second, "crime" is a political, not a value-free, concept. Traditional criminology accepts that crime is behavior that violates the law. Critical criminology, however, recognizes that what is and is not outlawed reflects the power structure in society. In general, the injurious acts of the poor and powerless are defined as crime, but the injurious acts of the rich and powerful—such as corporations selling defective products or the affluent allowing disadvantaged children to go without health care—are not brought within the reach of the criminal law. Only by rejecting state definitions of crime and replacing them with a new standard—such as defining crime as the violation of human rights—can criminologists oppose, rather than reinforce, existing inequalities. "What is certain is that the legalistic definitions cannot be justified as long as they make the activity of criminologists subservient to the state," comment Schwendinger and Schwendinger (1975: 138). "In the process of redefining crime, criminologists will redefine themselves, no longer to be the defenders of order but rather the guardians of human rights."

Third, as a defender of the existing social order, the criminal justice system ultimately serves the interests of the capitalist class. The system is largely set up to process poor and minority offenders—most of whom could find no meaningful place in the labor market—while ignoring the illegalities of rich and corporate offenders. As Reiman (1984) puts it, the system is designed so that "the rich get richer and the poor get prison." In enforcing order, moreover, criminal justice officials are not beyond breaking the law themselves, such as through police brutality and receiving payoffs in vice operations (Henderson and Simon, 1994). On a broader level, to protect its interests, the capitalist state will use its power to commit, largely with impunity, crimes against its own dissident citizens (e.g., illegal wiretapping against protesters), not to mention sponsoring covert actions to undermine other governments (Barak, 1991).

Fourth, capitalism is the root cause of criminal behavior (see Greenberg, 1993). Under capitalism, the human needs of the poor are ignored. Instead, they face demoralizing living conditions that foster crime by stunting healthy development (Currie, 1985) and/or by making crime a rational response (Gordon, 1973). More noteworthy, capitalism creates a fertile environment for crimes by rich and powerful white-collar offenders, including corporations (Pearce, 1976; Van Slyke et al., 2016). Pressures for profits, combined with lax state regulation and the infrequent application of criminal penalties, induce business enterprises to pursue profits through illegal methods. The consequences are not only huge economic losses but also violence that may well surpass that exacted by street crimes. Thus, by selling dangerously defective products, polluting the environment, and exposing workers to job

hazards and toxic agents, corporations exact an enormous toll in illnesses, injuries, and deaths (see Cullen et al., 2006; Hills, 1987; for an analysis of the costs of white-collar crime, see Cohen, 2016).

Fifth, the solution to crime is the creation of a more equitable society. Equipped with this knowledge, critical criminologists should unmask the ways in which capitalist-based exploitation creates crime and victimization. Equally important, they should not be armchair criminologists but rather should work to foster greater social justice. In particular, they should support humane policies aimed at preventing harm from occurring (see Maguire, 1988), and, more broadly, they should engage in political activity advocating a fairer distribution of wealth and power in society. For many critical criminologists, the goal of this reform effort is a socialist economy combined with a democratic political system sensitive to the needs of all citizens.

These broad principles inform much of the scholarship done under the broad name of critical criminology. Again, however, the intellectual richness of this perspective has resulted in many specific theoretical contributions—indeed, so many that it is beyond the scope of this volume to capture them all (see Greenberg, 1993; Lynch et al., 2000). Our main focus is on those works that have been particularly influential in addressing the question, Why does crime occur? We should note that critical criminologists are often criticized for studying how powerful interests shape the content of law and the operation of the criminal justice system (see, e.g., Chambliss and Seidman, 1982; Quinney, 1974; Turk, 1966) instead of providing specific insights into the etiology of criminal behavior. In contrast, the strength of traditional criminology is precisely its sustained concern with explaining involvement in crime and in subjecting theories to empirical tests. Critical criminology's viability as an alternative to traditional perspectives thus depends on advancing explanations of criminality that are both theoretically persuasive and backed up by the data.

Capitalism and Crime

Most critical criminologists' thinking is influenced, at least in a general way, by the work of Karl Marx. Marx believed that in a capitalist system, the bourgeoisie—those who owned the means of production—inevitably exploited the proletariat-workers who did not own the means of production. Capitalism thus resulted in the immiseration and demoralization of the working class, a condition that would only be alleviated when workers shed their false consciousness that existing economic arrangements were legitimate, realized their joint interests, and revolted to create a socialist system.

For our purposes, it is noteworthy that Marx, despite sporadic writings on criminality and law, did not spell out systematically the connection between capitalism and crime (Greenberg, 1993; Taylor et al., 1973). It remained for Willem Bonger (1969 [1916]), a Dutch criminologist, to author in 1916 what is now considered the first classic attempt to use Marx to explain crime, *Criminality and Economic Conditions* (see Chapter 21 in this part).

Following Marx's dim view of the social consequences of capitalism, Bonger offered the central thesis that the capitalist mode of production breeds crime. Bonger believed that the key proximate cause of criminality is the mental state of egoism, whereas the social sentiment of altruism fosters prosocial conduct. Egoism is rooted in economic relations; after all, the basis of capitalism is ruthless competition and the exploitation of others in the pursuit of individual profits. The larger social good is not considered and thus altruism is not encouraged. In the proletariat, especially among those most impoverished, brutish living conditions, efforts by the bourgeoisie to incite materialistic desires, and the lack of moral training intensify egoistic impulses. Not surprisingly, criminal behavior is widespread in this class.

Anticipating the work of Edwin Sutherland on white-collar crime, Bonger also recognized that capitalism creates crime among the bourgeoisie. Crimes such as bank fraud, selling adulterated products, and large-scale swindles are at times committed by businesses that are economically imperiled. But many offenses are engaged in by those whose businesses are flourishing. These illegalities are a product of a "bourgeois environment" that inculcates, even in children, the moral principle that honesty is to be valued only so long as it does not interfere with one's advantage (Bonger, 1969 [1916]: 136). Furthermore, bourgeois crimes are made attractive because "the opportunity to commit these offenses undetected is enormous" (p. 138). This "unlimited opportunity to deceive the public" is made possible by capitalism; indeed, these "bourgeois crimes … can be committed only under an economic system of the kind that ours is" (p. 140). Bourgeois economic criminals, moreover, have little to fear from the criminal law. As Bonger (p.: 142) noted, "the penalties prescribed for these crimes are relatively light as compared with those for ordinary crimes," and the "number of punishable acts is very limited as compared with those which really deserve punishment." In short, "it is these crimes which show clearly the class character of the penal law" (p. 142).

As might be anticipated, Bonger believed that under socialism—where the means of production were owned by the community—egoism would be discouraged and children would be morally educated to value altruism. Although sympathetic to his general theory, Taylor et al. (1973) take issue with Bonger's emphasis on the control of egoism as the key to reducing crime. In many ways, Bonger's theory moves away from Karl Marx and toward Emile Durkheim, the early anomie theorist who advocated the restraint of desires through moral education. This theoretical shift risks clouding Marx's fundamental focus on the misery caused by persisting inequality and on the need for working people to struggle against their exploitation. "Criminal man is consistently depicted [by Bonger] not so much as a man produced by a matrix of unequal social relationships, nor indeed as a man attempting to resolve those inequalities of wealth, power and life-chances," note Taylor et al. (1973: 235); "rather, criminal man is viewed as being in need of social control…. Socialism is preferable to capitalism, most of all, because it will control the baser instincts of man."

In contrast, the centrality of the proletariat's struggle against oppression by the capitalist class is vivid in Richard Quinney's *Class, State, and Crime* (1980), an important book written a half century after Bonger's *Criminality and Economic Conditions*. "The contradictions of developing capitalism," maintained Quinney (1980: 59), "heighten the level of class struggle and thereby increase (1) the need to dominate by the capitalist class and (2) the need to accommodate and resist by the classes exploited by capitalism, particularly the working class." In an effort to secure its advantage, the capitalist class commits economic crimes, denies people basic human rights, and uses the state to protect its interests and to repress the poor. For the working class, crime is best understood as a response to its members' harsh, inequitable living conditions. Their illegalities "range from unconscious reactions to exploitation, to conscious acts of survival within the capitalist system, to politically conscious acts of rebellion" (p. 65).

Similar to Bonger, Quinney notes that the "only lasting solution to the crisis of capitalism is socialism" (1980: 67). In the second edition of *Class, State, and Crime*, Quinney (1980) turned away from a strict Marxian theory of crime to recognize the importance of religion in human life. In his view, capitalism was beset not only by materialistic contradictions but also by a spiritual crisis—a "sacred void." Socialism thus must become spiritual, merging the secular and sacred to create a "prophetic socialist faith … a religious socialist culture" (p. ix). "The socialist struggle," commented Quinney, "requires a religious consciousness as much as a class consciousness … the religious goal transcends concrete societies. The prophetic expectation speaks finally to that which is infinite and eternal" (p. 68).

Quinney's embrace of the spiritual and its transformative powers, at the expense of the crass materialism of Marxism, is seen again in his subsequent efforts to lay the foundation for a "peacemaking criminology" (Pepinsky and Quinney, 1991). His writings in this area helped to trigger the development of a branch of critical criminology that remains vibrant today (Fuller and Wozniak, 2006; Wozniak, 2002; Wozniak and Braswell, 2002). We will return to the peacemaking perspective at the end of this part.

Pathways to Crime

Critical criminologists such as Quinney propose that capitalism is the root cause of criminal behavior. Their analyses, however, often are couched in general terms, with bourgeois crime attributed to the need for the capitalist class to maintain its dominance and working-class crime attributed to the dehumanizing and demoralizing conditions of life under capitalism. Although useful in sensitizing scholars to processes involved in producing crime, these earlier analyses did not detail the specific factors under capitalism that foster criminal conduct. More recently, however, important efforts have been made to demarcate the specific pathways that link capitalism to crime. Elliott Currie (Chapter 22 in this part) and Mark Colvin have made significant contributions in illuminating the mechanisms through which an unequal social structure produces criminal behavior.

Like others in the critical tradition, Elliott Currie (2009 [Chapter 22]) sees capitalism as the root cause of crime—especially of the United States' high rate of serious violent crime. But he is a wise social observer, and thus he recognizes that capitalism is not unique to America but is an integral feature of the current global economy. His special insight, however, is that capitalism comes in different forms. A number of advanced industrial nations embrace a more "compassionate capitalism," in which the government takes steps to ensure that inequality does not become too widespread and that "cushions" are in place to support those who are the losers in the economic competition. In contrast, the United States embraces a harsh brand of capitalism in which there are big winners and big losers. Compared to many advanced nations, in America the rich are richer but the poor are poorer—including poor children. Inequality (i.e., the gap between rich and poor) is thus much wider and supports for those citizens struggling to survive are less generous. The cost of enduring inequality, as a number of scholars have pointed out, is socially isolated and economically impoverished minority communities that are fertile soil for the growth of violent crime (see, e.g., Blau and Blau, 1982; Currie, 1985, 2020; Hagan, 1994; Hagan and Peterson, 1995; Peterson et al., 2006; Sampson, 1997; Short, 1997; for a review, see Ousey and Lee, 2013).

The culprit in this situation is the virtual omnipotence in America of what Currie calls a "market society" (see also Currie, 2009, 2013). He describes it in this way:

> By market society, I … mean … the spread of a civilization in which the pursuit of personal economic gain becomes increasingly the dominant organizing principle of social life; a social formation in which market principles, instead of being confined to some parts of the economy, and appropriately buffered and restrained by other social institutions and norms come to suffuse the whole social fabric—and to undercut and overwhelm other principles that have historically sustained individuals, families, and communities. (1997: 151–152)

Does this description of the "institutional imbalance" between the economy and other American social institutions sound familiar? It will for those who recall Messner and Rosenfeld's (2007; see Chapter 13) extension of Merton's anomie theory. These theorists contended that the power of the "American Dream" causes economic interests to "penetrate" and weaken other institutions (e.g., the family). The resulting institutional imbalance fosters anomie and impotent informal social controls.

Currie agrees with certain points in Messner and Rosenfeld's analysis, but, as a critical criminologist, he believes that the pathways to serious crime in the United States are in a different direction. Thus, he focuses less on the breakdown of control and more on how the market economy is an amoral force that robs people of their jobs, fails to care for at-risk kids and families, and acquits the government from doing much about the human costs of inequality. He believes that this unrelenting generation of social misery and lack of support is a "toxic brew" (1997: 167). In particular, Currie identifies seven pathways through which the market economy creates high rates of serious violent crime in the United States:

> … the progressive destruction of livelihood; the growth of extremes of economic inequality and material deprivation; the withdrawal of public services and supports, especially for families and children; the erosion of informal and communal networks of mutual support, supervision, and care; the spread of a materialistic, neglectful, and "hard" culture; the unregulated marketing of the technology of violence; and, not least, the weakening of social and political alternatives. (1997: 154)

Mark Colvin is another critical scholar who seriously explores the complexities of crime causation. His key insight is in illuminating another pathway through which an inequitable class structure produces crime and delinquency: coercion. This idea first took form in a collaborative work with John Pauly (1983). Colvin and Pauly argue that parents' class position in the labor market shapes the methods they use to exercise control over their children. Specifically, they link the way in which parents are disciplined in the workplace to how they come to discipline their own children.

Colvin and Pauly are most concerned with those who are employed in the secondary labor market (in "dead-end jobs"), because these workers are controlled through coercive sanctions (e.g., yelling at or firing of workers). Importing this style of control into the family, these parents tend to discipline their children coercively, attempting to enforce conformity through erratic, harsh punishment rather than through, for example, parent-child discussions aimed at developing internalized self-control. Such coercive discipline, however, proves counterproductive, alienating children and weakening bonds to parents. As problem behavior surfaces in school, the children are placed in strict or coercive class settings (e.g., special classes), further weakening their bond to society. They also are likely to associate with other alienated peers and to participate in delinquent subcultures. In short, they are on a pathway of deepening involvement in delinquency.

In *Crime and Coercion* (2000), Colvin expands on these themes, attempting to develop a more comprehensive "integrated theory of chronic criminality" (Colvin et al., 2002; Vander Ven and Colvin, 2013). A key premise of his perspective—again building on his work with Pauly—is that "coercive relations can appear in any number of settings, including workplaces, families, schools, among peers, and in state bureaucracies, such as welfare and criminal justice agencies" (2000: 52). Coercion—"compelling someone to act in a certain way"—occurs not only through "direct force and intimidation" but also "through the pressure of impersonal economic or social forces" (e.g., living in a community in which quality jobs have moved elsewhere; p. 36).

In proposing a "differential coercion theory," Colvin suggests most generally that the greater the degree of coercion, the greater the criminal involvement. More specifically, he proposes that people are most at risk for crime when they endure coercion that is harsh and erratically applied. He also details the intervening linkages, which he calls "social-psychological deficits," between the experience of coercion and crime. He argues, for example, that coercion causes criminal participation by increasing "coercive ideation," anger, feelings of humiliation, and an external locus of control and decreasing self-control, self-efficacy, and conventional social bonds (2000: 49–50). He amasses considerable evidence in favor of these premises. Empirical research lends further support to the core propositions of his theory (Baron, 2009; Unnever et al., 2004).

Colvin, however, is not interested in merely developing abstract theoretical principles but, similar to Elliott Currie, in placing his theory within the current American social context. In this regard, he asserts that in the United States, both interpersonal and impersonal coercion is tied to inequality. Inner-city youths thus are more likely to experience coercion in families, schools, peer groups, jobs located in the secondary labor market, and their neighborhoods. They are more often exposed to the conditions that cut off conventional life chances and ensnare them in a trajectory of chronic criminality. Also like Currie, Colvin's prescription for saving individual youths from bleak criminal futures and for reducing crime rates is clear: supportive social and criminal justice policies that reduce the multiple forms of coercion faced by our most vulnerable fellow Americans.

In this regard, Colvin and Currie might be seen as falling into a brand of critical criminology called "left realism" (DeKeseredy, 2010). Similar to other critical criminologists, they would favor creating a society that is truly equitable and democratic—that is, a society that sees inequality in living conditions and in political influence as unjustified. But in the absence of a dramatic transformation of the United States into a social democratic system, they advocate blunting the worst effects of inequality through a series of pragmatic programs that have been shown to be effective (Colvin, 2000; Currie, 1998). Thus, they would support policies such as early intervention programs for at-risk children, universal child care and health care to foster the healthy development of youngsters, public job programs for the unemployed, laws mandating that all full-time employees make a "living wage," and progressive tax policies that ensure the richest Americans pay their fair share.

It should be noted, however, that one benefit of critical criminology is its willingness to "think outside the box." When putting theory into action, advocates of more mainstream theories tend to focus on specific programs that might work with offenders or in a local community (see Barlow and Decker, 2010). These policy recommendations make sense because they seem attainable. Still, they lead us to focus more on incremental change rather than to envision a broader, more utopian call to action. One critical criminologist who has long thought "outside the box" and who has pushed the field to think more boldly is Richard Quinney. Later, we consider his efforts to create what has come to be known as "peacemaking criminology."

The Influence of Edwin Sutherland

As noted, a key contribution of critical criminology is that it illuminates the role of power in diverse types of criminal behavior. Although not ignoring street crime, scholars in this tradition have unmasked the ways in which the most advantaged actors violate the law in inordinately harmful ways, often protected from prosecution by the power they wield. Such actors can include not only those working in high-status jobs but also organizations such as corporations and the state. As seen in the work of Ronald Kramer and his colleagues (2002 [Chapter 23]), powerful entities can collude to engage in "state-corporate crime." We return to this topic in the next section. First, however, we explore the intellectual roots of this line of inquiry by considering the influence of Edward Sutherland in challenging the view that the poor and powerless had a monopoly on crime.

Although not a critical criminologist, Edwin Sutherland (1940 [Chapter 8]) is often known as the "father of white-collar crime" because he coined the term and brought its study into the field. Sutherland had worked for over a decade collecting relevant materials before he was ready to set forth the concept of white-collar crime (Geis and Goff, 1983). He presented his essay "White-Collar Criminality" to a combined meeting of economists and sociologists on December 27, 1939; the work would be published shortly thereafter in the *American Sociological Review* (see Chapter 8). Sutherland was not the first to call attention to crime in the business world. In 1907, for example, sociologist E. A. Rosspublished *Sin and Society: An Analysis of Latter-Day Iniquity*. In this slim volume, he showed how recent changes in the economy had created fresh opportunities for large industrial corporations to victimize citizens. Ross described these executives as "criminaloids," and he called for them to be held accountable for their companies' misdeeds and to be placed in prison. Despite the power of Ross's insights and rhetoric, he did not fundamentally reshape criminology. Rather, this accomplishment fell to Sutherland and the address he delivered shortly after Christmas in 1939. This day would establish him as the revered "father of white-collar crime."

As he rose to the podium, Sutherland understood that he would be challenging the powerful conventional wisdom that crime was a lower-class phenomenon. Scholars commonly linked criminality to poverty. After all, were not jails filled with the poor? The real debate was whether poverty was a social experience that created criminal motivations

or was merely a reflection of bad traits, such as feeblemindedness and psychopathology, that also caused crime. Sutherland (1940: 1) was prepared, however, to speak of "crime in relation to business."

It is not always clear why a scholar—in this case, Sutherland—would see the world differently than most of his peers. Sutherland (1940: 1) claimed that he was no "muckraker" and that he was disinterested in "reforming anything but criminology." His intent, he said, was scientific—to suggest that theories that explain only lower-class crime are inadequate because they cannot explain business crime. Gilbert Geis and Colin Goff (1983), biographers of Sutherland, find his portrayal of his motives misleading. They are persuaded that Sutherland had a hidden, reformist agenda that sprang from his outrage over the swindles perpetrated by business executives and professionals.

Sutherland's insights on crime in the business world might have slipped into scholarly oblivion, however, if he had not encapsulated them within the concept of white-collar crime. As Geis and Goff (1983: xiii) highlight, Sutherland added this term "to the American vocabulary." His construct was memorable precisely because the phrase "white-collar" conjures up an image of a certain kind of worker. In Sutherland's day, this was a person in the managerial or professional class. There simply was no ambiguity regarding who Sutherland was indicting: respected members of the community who used their trusted occupational positions to exploit the public.

Sutherland cemented his status as the father of this area of study with the publication in 1949 of *White Collar Crime*. This volume presented the results of Sutherland's analysis of the legal violations committed by the 70 largest industrial and commercial corporations over the course of their lifetimes, which averaged about 45 years. He discovered that every company had at least one adverse legal decision and that they averaged 14 violations. Fully 98% had two or more transgressions, leading Sutherland to conclude that most corporations were "recidivists."

One objection to his findings was that in calculating the number of violations, he counted not only criminal convictions but also decisions against companies in civil courts and by regulatory agencies. Sutherland defended this methodological choice by noting that the vast majority of the behaviors sanctioned civilly and by agencies would have been criminal if prosecuted. This is his "convictability" standard mentioned previously. He also asserted that he was measuring only wayward conduct by corporations that had been detected, a fraction of the illegalities that they undoubtedly had committed, since most offenses were concealed and thus never uncovered. Still, even when he limited his study to adverse criminal decisions, he found that 60% of the corporations had been "convicted in criminal courts" and had "an average of approximately four convictions each" (Sutherland, 1983 [1949]: 23). He then poignantly captured the core message these statistics communicated. "In many states," Sutherland (p. 23) observed, "persons with four convictions are defined by statute to be 'habitual offenders.'"

Sutherland's *White Collar Crime* thus succeeded in presenting hard data revealing that nearly all major companies broke the law and might well be considered career criminals. He presented these findings as though he were merely being a good scientist, but his stigmatizing corporations as "recidivists" and "habitual offenders" was strategically important in serving his reformist impulses. It was Sutherland's intent to pierce the veil of respectability behind which large and powerful businesses broke the law with impunity and to show the moral equivalency between corporate criminals and street criminals. In a scholarly but subversive way, he thus deconstructed the traditional beliefs that crime was the exclusive province of the poor and that high social status was a sign of moral superiority.

Finally, *White Collar Crime* was not really a study of all types of white-collar offenses. Rather, as stated, Sutherland restricted his empirical analysis to crimes by corporations. This was courageous because it meant that he was "taking on" America's most powerful bastion—a reality Sutherland confronted when the publisher of his 1949 book made him delete all companies' names so as to avoid potential lawsuits for libel (the names were restored in the 1983 "uncut version"; see Geis and Goff, 1983). His focus also was substantively important because it sensitized

subsequent generations of scholars to the prevalence of crimes by corporations and to the importance of studying lawlessness by society's most influential actors (see, in particular, Clinard and Yeager, 1980).

Crimes of the Powerful

Radicalized by the political and social turbulence of the 1960s and 1970s, critical criminologists seized on Sutherland's insights to document the nature and origins of the crimes of the powerful. Some scholars, such as William Chambliss and Richard Quinney, studied with students of Sutherland (Friedrichs et al., 2018). As noted, corporate crimes were of special interest because these harms were rarely criminally prosecuted despite exacting enormous financial costs, endangering the lives of consumers and workers, and eroding trust in the system (Coffee, 2020; Cullen et al., 2006; Cullen et al., 2009). For example, Barak (2019: 103) has recently noted the losses incurred in the 2008 Wall Street crash that led to the Great Recession—$22 trillion. Coffee (2020) has reminded us of the Volkswagen emission scandal, disclosed in 2015 and affecting 11 million vehicles worldwide, in which the company had a "defeat device" that allowed its vehicles to pass an emission test. While on the road, notes Coffee (2020: 41), the cars "emitted up to forty times more nitrogen oxide under actual driving conditions than under laboratory testing conditions." Coffee (2020) also documents the conviction of pharmaceutical companies for their role in marketing opioids to communities ravaged by drug-overdose deaths. The potential list of corporate malfeasance is virtually unending.

In his 1988 Presidential Address to the American Society of Criminology, William Chambliss (1989) introduced another crime of the powerful: *state-organized crime*. He described this criminality as "acts defined by law as criminal and committed by state officials in the pursuit of their job as representatives of the state" (1989: 184). "Piracy" was the first example he gave—a seemingly odd choice that became understandable upon further reflection. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Portugal and Spain controlled territories in the New World and plundered them from resources, including gold and silver. The British, French, and Dutch governments enlisted pirates to intercept and steal the cargo from ships carrying these prized goods, giving the pirates protection in exchange for stolen merchandise. Often, the pirates would "take no prisoners," murdering all on board. On one voyage, Francis Drake allegedly "returned to England with enough gold and silver to support the government and all its expenses for a period of 7 years" (Chambliss, 1989: 186).

In his address, Chambliss then documented the CIA's role during U.S. foreign entanglements (e.g., Vietnam War, Iran-Contra Affair) in drug and arms smuggling, and its role over the years in political assassinations and coups in other nations. He also noted the willingness of the FBI to illegally wiretap and otherwise harass domestic protest groups (e.g., antiwar and Civil Rights groups). In more contemporary times, Rothe (2020: 8) summarizes a wealth of studies focusing on topics such as the American invasion of Iraq on misleading grounds, the government's failure to respond rapidly to the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina, and "the illegal and threatened use of nuclear weapons." Now in its tenth volume in 2021, the *State Crime Journal* catalogues an array of state violations of domestic and international law. Furthermore, in a stunning essay on "atrocity crimes," Brehm and Frizzell (2021) show that in the past century, governments killed more people than those who perished in international wars and from domestic murders. Millions have been harmed or died in the Holocaust and in "China, Columbia, Myanmar, Syria, and Sudan, among many other places" (2021: 131). State atrocities flow from "war crimes (i.e., crimes that violate the laws of war), crimes against humanity (i.e., widespread and/or systematic attacks on civilians), genocide (i.e., actions taken with the intent to destroy a social group), and crimes of aggression (i.e., other unlawful state violence using military force"; Brehm and Frizzell, 2021: 133). Finally, an account certainly will be written recording the state crimes by the

Trump administration, including impeachable offenses, financial exploitation, pollution of the environment, mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic, and cruelty toward immigrants, especially children, at the U.S. Southern border (Cullen et al., forthcoming; Friedrichs and Weis, 2021; Kramer, 2020; Soboroff, 2020).

In a pathbreaking insight, Ronald Kramer, Raymond Michalowski, and David Kauzlarich (2002 [Chapter 23 in this part]) observed that when engaging in crime, corporations and the state do not always act independently. Instead, they are often "in it together"—two powerful actors colluding to achieve a goal. Kramer and his colleagues thus combined corporate crime and state crime into a new and important construct—*state-corporate crime*. Although they have used different definitions, the gist of this illegality is that it involves "wrongdoing at the intersection of business and government" (Kramer, 2020: 3; see also Rothe, 2020). They have found it useful to distinguish two types of collusion—one in which the state calls on a corporation to achieve a desired outcome ("state-initiated corporate crime") and one in which the government allows or encourages a corporation to break the law ("state-facilitated corporate crime").

As Rothe (2020: 9) notes, state-corporate crime "involve some level of implicit or explicit cooperation between states and corporations," largely because the agendas between these organizational entities and individuals at the top of these institutional hierarchies are "intersecting." A key source of harms they commit is when the state passes laws deregulating business practices or fails to enforce existing laws. This lack of regulatory oversight can occur when politicians seek to boost companies' profit or hope to attract new firms to their locale by creating a so-called "business friendly" environment. It is fostered as well when corporations use their financial power to influence state actors or to "capture" state agencies (e.g., making campaign contributions, offering positions to officials after they leave an agency).

In a classic study of state-corporate crime, Aulette and Michalowski (1993) revisited the 1991 fire at Imperial Food Products, Inc., in Hamlett, North Carolina, in which 25 people perished. The company owner, who would serve a 4½-year prison sentence, was blamed for this tragedy because the plant had no sprinklers or windows and the fire-exit door was chained shut to stop employees from pilfering product. But as Aulette and Michalowski pointed out, the state was complicit in the death toll, thus making this a state-corporate crime. The unsafe working conditions were made possible by a permissive state regulatory environment intended to be business friendly. The North Carolina OSHA had not inspected the 100-year-old plant in over a decade. Recent investigative studies have similarly shown the role of the state in facilitating corporate practices that have jeopardized untold numbers of lives in the opioid crisis, the coronavirus epidemic, the spread of type 2 diabetes, and carbon pollution and climate change (see, e.g., Friedrichs and Weis, 2021; Kramer, 2020; Robinson and Turner, 2019; see also Rothe, 2020). Again, the state and corporations are society's most powerful actors that touch everyone's lives, from our pocketbooks and our health. They can cooperate and do much good by providing livelihoods and enriching our quality of life, but they also can cooperate and do immense harm when they engage in state-corporate crimes.

Peacemaking Criminology

Richard Quinney has been perhaps the most influential critical criminologist over the past three decades. In large part, Quinney's influence is due to his willingness to explore new horizons in his thinking. Unlike most criminologists, he has not staked out a theory and then defended it "to the end." Instead, his ideas have evolved, at times in ways that appear inconsistent with earlier theoretical positions. For example, in *Class, State, and Crime*, Quinney (1980) gives a classic Marxist, materialist interpretation of crime in capitalist America. By contrast, his later work on "peacemaking criminology" seems to offer a distinctly different way of understanding crime.

Paradoxically, this portrayal of his criminologies as being inconsistent with one another is both correct and incorrect. It is correct because each step in Quinney's intellectual journey is *transformative*; that is, his ideas are not mere "add ons" to his previous thinking but emerge as qualitatively different. The portrayal of intellectual inconsistency is inaccurate because Quinney's new ideas are not a rejection of the old. Rather, the old is folded into the new as Quinney seeks to illuminate social reality in fresh ways. His theorizing is not linear but holistic (Quinney, 2002). Thus, two decades after their publication, he would not deny his materialistic insights on capitalist America because he would still view these inequitable structures as creating suffering and crime (Anderson, 2002). But in his later work, Quinney changes angles and uses the vision of peacemaking to show how individuals and social policies might create conditions in which the sources of crime will not be nourished (Wozniak et al., 2008).

Thus, writing in 1991, Quinney offered a classic statement that—along with contemporaneous writings from feminists and those with a progressive religious inspiration (Fuller, 1998; Fuller and Wozniak, 2006; Pepinsky and Quinney, 1991)—helped to initiate peacemaking criminology. Here, Quinney suggests that as individuals we are on a spiritual journey, which involves transcending one's egocentric self to understand the suffering in ourselves and in the world. Inner peace and peacemaking actions are intertwined and reinforcing. Without such peace, crime is inevitable. "Crime is suffering," Quinney reminds us, and "the ending of crime is possible only with the ending of suffering" (1991: 11). But advancing peace and diminishing suffering require social justice; "this is the biblical command" (p. 11). The goal of a peacemaking criminology is thus to seek "to end suffering and thereby eliminate crime.... Without peace within us and in our actions, there can be no peace in our results. Peace is the way" (pp. 11–12).

The work of Quinney and other peacemaking criminologists is fresh, even inspiring, but is it scientific? These scholars have tended to offer a different way of thinking without providing any empirical evidence that their approach is in fact a more powerful explanation of criminal behavior than alternative theories. Recently, however, Fuller and Wozniak (2006) have derived a set of 17 propositions that take peacemaking criminology from a perspective that sensitizes readers to different realities to one that is potentially testable just like any other theory. For example, they argue that crime and victimization will be less "when underlying social harms are more consistently addressed," and that individuals "who are responsive, mindful, and connected" will be less involved in illegal conduct (2006: 270). To the extent that scholars investigate these propositions, peacemaking criminology will earn more legitimacy among criminologists in the discipline.

Regardless, peacemaking criminology is not—and never will be—simply a dry theory; it is also a call to action. And, today, many critical scholars are embracing Quinney's prescription to make peace (Fuller, 1998; Lozoff and Braswell, 1989; Wozniak, 2002; Wozniak et al., 2008). For them, criminologists should use their knowledge and lives to create social justice. They reject, in particular, traditional "get tough" criminal justice responses to crime, which they argue attempt fruitlessly to fight violence with violence, suffering with more suffering. How many more failures will be necessary before we conclude that "wars on crime" never prove successful? Instead, they favor programs such as "restorative justice" that seek to mediate conflict, to address the real needs of victims, and to reintegrate offenders into a community that can instruct them in the ways of peace.

More generally, they assert that freeing ourselves from the burden of crime will require the ability to reject the inevitability of our current market society and related structures of inequality. The challenge is thus to *envision a new society* in which the scourges of racism, sexism, and classism are abandoned and in which the human needs of all citizens are given the highest priority. What might our society be like, they ask, if the government was less concerned with the gross national product (GNP) and with producing wealth and truly committed to seeing that every single child was born into and raised in a healthy and caring environment? This thinking is not utopian but rather a political option that must be articulated and fought for—one child at a time. Peacemaking criminology thus

is not merely a theory but a way of imagining a future in which the struggle against suffering and crime is ongoing (Tifft, 2002).

In this context, the recently concluded presidency of Donald Trump and the far-right nationalist movements in the United States and in European nations comprise a troubling development for peacemaking scholars and, indeed, for all critical criminologists. The attack on social welfare supports, such as repealing health care protections to fund tax breaks for the rich, is a stark reminder of the capacity for economic interests in a crass capitalist environment to take priority over human suffering. The vilification of immigrants—whether from south of the U.S. border or from abroad—is viewed by leftist analysts as a means to stoke populist white fears and to divert attention from policies that reinforce existing structures of inequality. Rather than greeting vulnerable populations with peace and understanding, the Trump administration's approach pursued exclusion and demonization (Davis and Shear, 2019; Soboroff, 2020). The call was to build walls, not bridges. Empirically, research shows that racial and ethnic animus is a predictor of punitiveness both within the United States and in other Western nations (Hannan et al., forthcoming; Unnever and Cullen, 2010; Unnever et al., 2008). This aligns with Trump's claim to be the "law-and-order president" and to show a near-blind support for law enforcement personnel, whether deployed to the nation's borders or in inner-city neighborhoods (cf. Hayes, 2017 with Mac Donald, 2016; see also McManus et al., 2019). For critical criminologists, the challenge has been to deconstruct the prevailing rhetoric and to unmask myth from reality (DeKeseredy and Currie, 2019). For example, an important reality is that, as noted by Kubrin (2013: 440), "a substantial literature consistently finds that immigrants are less, not more, crime prone than their native-born counterparts." The larger project is to resist, through their writings and praxis, attempts to transform Western governments into anti-liberal, authoritarian-oriented regimes that inflict harm rather than spread peace.

References

Anderson, Kevin B. 2002. “Richard Quinney’s Journey: The Marxist Dimension.” *Crime and Delinquency* **48**: 232–242.

Aulette, Judy R. and Raymond Michalowski. 1993. “Fire in Hamlet: A Case Study of State-Corporate Crime.” In Kenneth D. Tunnell (ed.), *Political Crime in Contemporary America*, pp. 171–206. New York: Garland.

Barak, Gregg, ed. 1991. *Crimes by the Capitalist State: An Introduction to State Criminality*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Barak, Gregg. 2019. “Corporate Criminality and Resisting Financial and Securities Fraud.” In Walter S. DeKeseredy and Elliott Currie (eds.), *Progressive Justice in an Age of Repression: Strategies for Challenging the Rise of the Right*, pp. 99–133. New York: Routledge.

Barlow, Hugh D. and Scott H. Decker, eds. 2010. *Criminology and Public Policy: Putting Theory to Work*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Baron, Stephen W. 2009. “Differential Coercion, Street Youth, and Violent Crime.” *Criminology* **47**: 239–268.

Blau, Judith R. and Peter M. Blau. 1982. “The Cost of Inequality: Metropolitan Structure and Violent Crime.” *American Sociological Review* **47**: 114–129.

Bohm, Robert M. 1982. “Radical Criminology.” *Criminology* **19**: 565–589.

Bonger, Willem. 1969 [1916]. *Criminality and Economic Conditions*, abridged edition, edited by Austin T. Turk. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Brehm, Hollie Nyseth and Laura C. Frizzell. 2021. “Victims of Atrocity Crimes.” In Travis C. Pratt and Jillian J. Turanovic (eds.), *Revitalizing Victimization Theory: Revisions, Applications, and New Directions—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **27**, pp. 131–162. New York: Routledge.

Chambliss, William J. 1989. “State-Organized Crime—The American Society of Criminology, 1988 Presidential Address.” *Criminology* **27**: 183–208.

Chambliss, William and Robert Seidman. 1982. *Law, Order, and Power*, 2nd edition. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Clinard, Marshall B. and Peter C. Yeager. 1980. *Corporate Crime*. New York: Free Press.

Coffee, John C., Jr. 2020. *Corporate Crime and Punishment: The Crisis of Underenforcement*. New York: Berrett-Koehler.

Cohen, Mark A. 2016. “The Costs of White-Collar Crime.” In Shanna R. Van Slyke, Michael L. Benson, and Francis T. Cullen (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of White-Collar Crime*, pp. 78–98. New York: Oxford University Press.

Colvin, Mark. 2000. *Crime and Coercion: An Integrated Theory of Chronic Criminality*. New York: St. Martin’s Press.

Colvin, Mark, Francis T. Cullen, and Thomas Vander Ven. 2002. “Coercion, Social Support, and Crime: An Emerging Theoretical Consensus.” *Criminology* **40**: 19–42.

Colvin, Mark and John Pauly. 1983. “A Critique of Criminology: Toward an Integrated Structural-Marxist Theory of Delinquency Production.” *American Journal of Sociology* **89**: 513–551.

Cullen, Francis T., Gray Cavender, William J. Maakestad, and Michael Benson. 2006. *Corporate Crime Under Attack: The Fight to Criminalize Business Violence*, 2nd edition. Cincinnati: Anderson/LexisNexis.

Cullen, Francis T., Amanda Graham, Cheryl Lero Jonson, Justin T. Pickett, Melissa M. Sloan, and Murat Haner. Forthcoming. "The Denier in Chief: Faith in Trump and Techniques of Neutralization in a Pandemic." *Deviant Behavior*.

Cullen, Francis T., Jennifer L. Hartman, and Cheryl Lero Jonson. 2009. "Bad Guys: Why the Public Supports Punishing White-Collar Offenders." *Crime, Law, and Social Change* **51**: 31–44.

Currie, Elliott. 1985. *Confronting Crime: An American Challenge*. New York: Pantheon.

____. 1997. "Market, Crime, and Community: Toward a Mid-Range Theory of Post-Industrial Violence." *Theoretical Criminology* **1**: 147–172.

____. 1998. *Crime and Punishment in America*. New York: Metropolitan Books.

____. 2009. *The Roots of Danger: Violent Crime in Global Perspective*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

____. 2013. "The Market Economy and Crime." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 424–439. New York: Oxford University Press.

____. 2020. *A Peculiar Indifference: The Neglected Toll of Violence on Black America*. New York: Metropolitan Books.

Davis, Julie Hirschfeld and Michael D. Shear. 2019. *Border Wars: Inside Trump's Assault on Immigration*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

DeKeseredy, Walter S. 2010. "Left Realism Criminology." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*, pp. 546–550. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

DeKeseredy, Walter S. and Elliott Currie, eds. 2019. *Progressive Justice in an Age of Repression: Strategies for Challenging the Rise of the Right*. New York: Routledge.

Friedrichs, David O., Isabel Schoultz, and Aleksandra Jordanoska. 2018. *Edwin Sutherland*. London: Routledge.

Friedrichs, David O. and Valaria Vegh Weis. 2021. "COVID-19 and the U.S. Health Care Industry: Towards a 'Critical Health Criminology' within State Crime Studies." *State Crime Journal* **10**: 126–146.

Fuller, John R. 1998. *Criminal Justice: A Peacemaking Perspective*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Fuller, John R. and John F. Wozniak. 2006. "Peacemaking Criminology: Past, Present, and Future." In Francis T. Cullen, John Paul Wright, and Kristie R. Blevins (eds.), *Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **15**, pp. 251–273. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Geis, Gilbert and Colin Goff. 1983. "Introduction." In Edwin H. Sutherland (ed.), *White Collar Crime: The Uncut Version*, pp. ix–xxxiii. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Gordon, David M. 1973. "Capitalism, Class, and Crime in America." *Crime and Delinquency* **19**: 163–186.

Greenberg, David F., ed. 1993. *Crime and Capitalism: Readings in Marxist Criminology, expanded and* updated edition. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Hagan, John. 1994. *Crime and Disrepute*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Hagan, John and Ruth D. Peterson, eds. 1995. *Crime and Inequality*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Hannan, Kellie R., Francis T. Cullen, Leah C. Butler, Amanda Graham, Alexander L. Burton, and Velmer S. Burton, Jr. Forthcoming. "Racial Sympathy and Support for Capital Punishment: A Case Study in Concept Transfer." *Deviant*

Behavior.

Hayes, Chris. 2017. *A Colony in a Nation*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Henderson, Joel H. and David R. Simon. 1994. *Crimes of the Criminal Justice System*. Cincinnati: Anderson.

Hills, Stuart L., ed. 1987. *Corporate Violence: Injury and Death for Profit*. Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield.

Kramer, Ronald C. 2020. *Carbon Criminals, Climate Criminals*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Kramer, Ronald C., Raymond J. Michalowski, and David Kauzlarich. 2002. "The Origins and Development of the Concept and Theory of State-Corporate Crime." *Crime and Delinquency* **48**: 263–282.

Krisberg, Barry. 1975. *Crime and Privilege: Toward a New Criminology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Kubrin, Charis. 2013. "Immigration and Crime." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 440–455. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lozoff, Bo and Michael Braswell. 1989. *Inner Corrections: Finding Peace and Peace Making*. Cincinnati: Anderson.

Lynch, Michael J., Raymond Michalowski, and W. Byron Groves. 2000. *A New Primer in Radical Criminology: Critical Perspectives on Crime, Power, and Identity*, 3rd edition. Monsey, NY: Criminal Justice Press.

Mac Donald, Heather. 2016. *The War on Cops: How the New Attack on Law and Order Makes Everyone Less Safe*. New York: Encounter Books.

Maguire, Brendan. 1988. "The Applied Dimension of Radical Criminology: A Survey of Prominent Radical Criminologists." *Sociological Spectrum* **8**: 133–151.

McManus, Hannah D., Francis T. Cullen, Cheryl Lero Jonson, Alexander L. Burton, and Velmer S. Burton, Jr. 2019. "Will Black Lives Still Matter to the Police: African Americans' Concerns in the Trump Presidency." *Victims and Offenders* **14**: 1040–1062.

Messner, Steven F. and Richard Rosenfeld. 2007. *Crime and the American Dream*, 4th edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Milovanovic, Dragan. 1982. "Review Essay: Contemporary Directions in Critical Criminology." *Humanity and Society* **6**: 303–313.

Ousey, Graham C. and Matthew R. Lee. 2013. "Community, Inequality, and Crime." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 352–369. New York: Oxford University Press.

Patterson, James T. 1996. *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945–1974*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Pearce, Frank. 1976. *Crimes of the Powerful; Marxism, Crime and Deviance*. London: Pluto Press.

Pepinsky, Harold E. and Richard Quinney, eds. 1991. *Criminology as Peacemaking*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Peterson, Ruth D., Lauren J. Krivo, and John Hagan, eds. 2006. *The Many Colors of Crime: Inequalities of Race, Ethnicity, and Crime in America*. New York: New York University Press.

Quinney, Richard. 1974. *Critique of Legal Order: Crime Control in Capitalist Society*. Boston: Little, Brown.

____ 1980. *Class, State, and Crime*, 2nd edition. New York: Longman.

____. 1991. "The Way of Peace: On Crime, Suffering, and Service." In Harold E. Pepinsky and Richard Quinney (eds.), *Criminology as Peacemaking*, pp. 3–13. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press.

____. 2002. "Criminologist as Witness." In Gilbert Geis and Mary Dodge (eds.), *Lessons of Criminology*, pp. 165–183. Cincinnati: Anderson.

Reiman, Jeffrey H. 1984. *The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison: Ideology, Class, and Criminal Justice*, 2nd edition. New York: John Wiley.

Robinson, Matthew and Caroline Turner. 2019. “Incidence and Prevalence of Type 2 Diabetes in America: Is There Culpability in the Food Industry?” *State Crime Journal* **8**: 176–218.

Ross, E. A. 1907. *Sin and Society: An Analysis of Latter-Day Iniquity*. New York: Harper and Row.

Rothe, Dawn L. 2020. “Moving Beyond Abstract Typologies? Overview of State and State-Corporate Crime.” *Journal of White Collar and Corporate Crime* **1**: 7–15.

Sampson, Robert J. 1997. “The Embeddedness of Child and Adolescent Development: A Community-Level Perspective on Urban Violence.” In Joan McCord (ed.), *Violence and Childhood in the Inner City*, pp. 31–77. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Schwendinger, Herman and Julia Schwendinger. 1975. “Defenders of Order or Guardians of Human Rights?” In Ian Taylor, Paul Walton, and Jock Young (eds.), *Critical Criminology*, pp. 113–146. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Short, James F. 1997. *Poverty, Ethnicity, and Violent Crime*. Boulder, CO: Westview.

Soboroff, Jacob. 2020. *Separated: Inside an American Tragedy*. New York: Custom House.

Sutherland, Edwin H. 1940. “White-Collar Criminality.” *American Sociological Review* **5**: 1–12.

____ 1983 [1949]. *White Collar Crime: The Uncut Version*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Taylor, Ian, Paul Walton, and Jock Young. 1973. *The New Criminology: For a Social Theory of Deviance*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Thomas, Jim and Aogan O’Maolchatha. 1989. “Reassessing the Critical Metaphor: An Optimistic Revisionist View.” *Justice Quarterly* **6**: 143–172.

Tifft, Larry L. 2002. “Crime and Peace: A Walk with Richard Quinney.” *Crime and Delinquency* **48**: 243–262.

Turk, Austin T. 1966. “Conflict and Criminality.” *American Sociological Review* **31**: 338–352.

Unnever, James, Mark Colvin, and Francis T. Cullen. 2004. “Crime and Coercion: A Test of Core Theoretical Propositions.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **41**: 244–268.

Unnever, James D. and Francis T. Cullen. 2010. “Racial-Ethnic Intolerance and Support for Capital Punishment: A Cross-National Comparison.” *Criminology* **48**: 831–862.

Unnever, James D., Francis T. Cullen, and Cheryl Lero Jonson. 2008. “Race, Racism, and Support for Capital Punishment.” In Michael Tonry (ed.), *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, Volume **37**, pp. 45–96. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Vander, Ven, Thomas and Mark Colvin. 2013. “Coercion and Crime.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 607–624. New York: Oxford University Press.

Van Slyke, Shanna R., Michael L. Benson, and Francis T. Cullen, eds. 2016. *The Oxford Handbook of White-Collar Crime*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wozniak, John F. 2002. “Toward a Theoretical Model of Peacemaking Criminology: An Essay in Honor of Richard Quinney.” *Crime and Delinquency* **48**: 204–231.

Wozniak, John F. and Michael Braswell, eds. 2002. “Special Issue—Criminology at the Edge: Essays in Honor of Richard Quinney.” *Crime and Delinquency* **48**: 199–349.

Wozniak, John F., Michael C. Braswell, Ronald E. Vogel, and Kristie R. Blevins, eds. 2008. *Transformative Justice: Critical and Peacemaking Themes Influenced by Richard Quinney*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

21.
Criminality and Economic Conditions*

Willem Bonger

For Bonger, crime is a form of egoism—a rejection of the social instinct of altruism and of placing one's own interests above those of other people. Understanding crime, therefore, depends on answering the question, "Why does a man act egoistically?" (Bonger, 1969 [1916]: 26).

Writing in 1916, Bonger took pains to dismiss the answer of his contemporary Lombroso (see Chapter 2) and the members of his Italian or positivist school of criminology, who saw criminals' egoism as a "manifestation of atavism, that is, that some individuals present anew traits of character belonging to their very remote ancestors" (Bonger 1969 [1916]: 26). This explanation could not account, said Bonger, for evidence of altruism in earlier, supposedly less civilized, times or for bourgeois crimes in the present. Referring to the lawlessness of the rich, Bonger noted that "even the Italian school is forced to admit that the stigmata found elsewhere cannot be pointed out in these individuals. Furthermore," continued Bonger, "in this case we can hardly speak of atavism. It may be that our ancestors were great offenders, but it is not probable that they ever were guilty of swindles of this kind" (p. 142).

Instead, Bonger contended that egoism was a product of the social environment and, in particular, was linked intimately to the "mode of production." In his view, capitalism breeds egoism because it is, by its very nature, an economic system in which individual self-interest is pursued regardless of its consequences for others. The bourgeoisie—those who own the means of production—thus use unscrupulous means, illegal if necessary, to protect and advance their economic advantage. In search of profits, they also exploit the proletariat, paying them as little as possible for their labor and feeling no reciprocity or sense of obligation toward them. Instead, the bourgeoisie see workers as mere instruments to serve their interests—people whose human needs and material well-being are of scant concern.

For the proletariat, capitalism causes egoism and thus crime to flourish. Their exploitive, rather than reciprocal, relationships with the bourgeoisie dull their altruistic sentiments. Brutish living conditions also serve to demoralize the proletariat, especially those in the "lower proletariat … who do not succeed, for any reason, in selling their labor" (Bonger, 1969 [1916]: 52). In these harsh circumstances, the moral training necessary for the development of altruism is undermined, as youths are prematurely sent to work, are denied education, are raised in families and housing conditions detrimental to their healthy development, and are exposed to criminal influences on the street.

In the end, observed Bonger, "we have a right to say that the part played by economic conditions in criminality is preponderant, even decisive" (1969 [1916]: 197). Still, room for optimism remained. If crime "were principally the consequence of innate human qualities (atavism, for example)," as Lombroso might claim, "the pessimistic conclusion that crime is a phenomenon inseparably bound up with the social life would be well founded" (p. 197). But because "crime is the consequence of economic and social conditions," contended Bonger, "we can combat it by changing those circumstances" (p. 197). The answer is to replace capitalism with socialism, with a society in which

"the means of production are held in common" (p. 198). According to Bonger, "such a society will not only remove the causes which now make men egoistic, but will awaken, on the contrary, a strong feeling of altruism" (p. 200). With the economic basis of crime thus eliminated, only crimes committed by "pathological individuals" would continue to exist (p. 200).

Bonger's criminology can be criticized for its rather crude economic determinism, its simple psychology of crime that ties crime only to the sentiments of egoism versus altruism, and its utopian view of socialism. Even so, Bonger's theory has value in showing that a capitalist economy has consequences, simultaneously creating demoralizing conditions that impede the healthy development of the poor and creating strong incentives for the rich to break the law.

Reference

Bonger, Willem. 1969 [1916]. *Criminality and Economic Conditions*, abridged edition, edited by Austin T. Turk. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

To find the causes of crime we must … first solve the question: "Why does an individual do acts injurious to the interests of those with whom he forms a social unit?", or in other words: "Why does a man act egoistically?"

---

* Reprinted with permission by Indiana University Press, from *Criminality and Economic Conditions,* William Bonger, pages 402–410, 1969; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

Capitalism, Egoism, and Crime

... As we have seen in the preceding pages, it is certain that man is born with social instincts, which, when influenced by a favorable environment can exert a force great enough to prevent egoistic thoughts from leading to egoistic acts. And since crime constitutes a part of the egoistic acts, it is of importance, for the etiology of *crime in general*, to inquire whether the present method of production and its social consequences are an obstacle to the development of the social instincts, and in what measure. We shall try in the following pages to show the influence of the economic system and of these consequences upon the social instincts of man.

After what we have just said it is almost superfluous to remark that the egotistic tendency does not *by itself* make a man criminal. For this something else is necessary. It is possible for the environment to create a great egoist, but this does not imply that the egoist will necessarily become criminal. For example, a man who is enriched by the exploitation of children may nevertheless remain all his life an honest man from the legal point of view. He does not think of stealing, because he has a surer and more lucrative means of getting wealth, although he lacks the moral sense which would prevent him from committing a crime if the thought of it occurred to him. We shall show that, as a consequence of the present environment, man has become very egoistic and hence more *capable of crime*, than if the environment had developed the germs of altruism.

The present economic system is based upon exchange. As we saw at the end of the preceding section such a mode of production cannot fail to have an egoistic character. A society based upon exchange isolates the individuals by weakening the bond that unites them. When it is a question of exchange the two parties interested think only of their own advantage even to the detriment of the other party. In the second place the possibility of exchange arouses in a man the thought of the possibility of converting the surplus of his labor into things which increase his well-being in place of giving the benefit of it to those who are deprived of the necessaries of life. Hence the possibility of exchange gives birth to cupidity.

The exchange called simple circulation of commodities is practiced by all men as consumers, and by the workers besides as vendors of their labor power. However, the influence of this simple calculation of commodities is weak compared with that exercised by capitalistic exchange. It is only the exchange of the surplus of labor, by the producer, for other commodities, and hence is for him a secondary matter. As a result he does not exchange with a view to profit (though he tries to make as advantageous a trade as possible), but to get things which he cannot produce himself.

Capitalistic exchange, on the other hand, has another aim—that of making a profit. A merchant, for example, does not buy goods for his own use, but to sell them with advantage. He will, then, always try, on the one hand, to buy the best commodities as cheaply as possible, by depreciating them as much as he can; on the other hand, to make the purchaser pay as high a price as possible, by exaggerating the value of his wares. *By the nature of the mode of production itself* the merchant is therefore forced to make war upon two sides, must maintain his own interests against the interests of those with whom he does business. If he does not injure too greatly the interests of those from whom he buys, and those to whom he sells, it is for the simple reason that these would otherwise do business with those of his competitors who do not find their interest in fleecing their customers. Wherever competition is eliminated for whatever cause the tactics of the merchant are shown in their true light; he thinks only of his own advantage even to the detriment of those with whom he does business. “No commerce without trickery” is a proverbial expression (among consumers), and with the ancients Mercury, the god of commerce, was also the god of

thieves. This is true, that the merchant and the thief are alike in taking account *exclusively* of their own interest to the detriment of those with whom they have to do….

As we have seen above the merchant capitalist makes war in two directions; his interests are against those of the man who sells to him, and of the man who buys from him. This is also true of the industrial capitalist. He buys raw materials and sells what he produces. But to arrive at his product he must buy labor, and this purchase is "sui generis."

Deprived as he is of the means of production the working-man sells his labor only in order not to die of hunger. The capitalist takes advantage of this necessitous condition of the worker and exploits him. We have already indicated that capitalism has this trait in common with the earlier methods of production. Little by little one class of men has become accustomed to think that the others are destined to amass wealth for them and to be subservient to them in every way. Slavery, like the wage system, demoralizes the servant as well as the master. With the master it develops cupidity and the imperious character which sees in a fellow man only a being fit to satisfy his desires. It is true that the capitalist has not the power over the proletarian that the master has over his slave; he has neither the right of service nor the power of life and death, yet it is none the less true that he has another weapon against the proletarian, a weapon whose effect is no less terrible, namely enforced idleness. The fact that the supply of manual labor always greatly exceeds the demand puts this weapon into the hands of every capitalist. It is not only the capitalists who carry on any business that are subjected to this influence, but also all who are salaried in their service.

Capitalism exercises in still a third manner an egoistic influence upon the capitalistic "entrepreneur." Each branch has more producers than are necessary. The interests of the capitalists are, then, opposed not only to those of the men from whom they buy or to whom they sell, but also to those of their fellow producers. It is indeed claimed that competition has the effect simply of making the product better and cheaper, but this is looking at the question from only one point of view. The fact which alone affects criminality is that competition forces the participants, under penalty of succumbing, to be as egoistic as possible. Even the producers who have the means of applying all the technical improvements to perfect their product and make it cheaper, are obliged to have recourse to gross deceits in advertising, etc., in order to injure their competitors. Rejoicing at the evil which befalls another, envy at his good fortune, these forms of egoism are the inevitable consequence of competition.

Following the same classification that we employed in the preceding chapter we come now to that part of the bourgeoisie which, without having any occupation, consumes what has been made by others. Not to feel obliged to contribute to the material well-being of humanity in proportion to one's ability must necessarily have a demoralizing influence. A parasite, one who lives without working, does not feel bound by any moral tie to his fellows, but regards them simply as things, instruments meant to serve and amuse him. Their example is a source of demoralization for those [who] see this easy life without the power of enjoying it themselves, and awakes in them the desire to exchange their painful existence for this "dolce far niente." …

The Proletariat

To be thorough we begin by making mention of one of the consequences of the economic position of the proletariat, of which we have already treated briefly, namely the dependence in which persons of this class find themselves in consequence of their lacking the means of production, a state which has a prejudicial influence upon character. The oppressed resort to means by which they would otherwise scorn. As we have seen above, the basis of the social feelings is reciprocity. As soon as this is trodden under foot by the ruling class the social sentiments of the oppressed become weak towards them.

We come now ... first to the consequences of the labor of the young. The paid labor of the young has a bad influence in several ways. First, it forces them, while they are still very young, to think only of their own interests; then, brought into contact with persons who are rough and indifferent to their well-being, they follow these only too quickly, because of their imitative tendencies, in their bad habits, grossness of speech, etc. Finally, the paid labor of the young makes them more or less independent at an age where they have the greatest need of guidance. Even if the statistical proof of the influence of the labor of children and young people upon criminality were totally wanting, no one could deny that influence. Child labor is entirely a capitalistic phenomenon being found especially in the great manufacturing countries like England and Germany. And then one of the most salient facts of criminality is the amount of juvenile crime, which is so enormous that England, followed by other countries, has established a special system to combat this form of criminality. Certainly this increase of juvenile crime is chiefly due to the influence of bad domestic conditions (wage-labor of married women, etc.), but the labor of the young people themselves also plays its part.

It has rightly been said that work has a strong moral influence. But it is also true that immoderate labor has the contrary effect. It brutalizes a man, makes him incapable of elevated sentiments, kills as Key says (in “das Jahrhundert des Kindes”), the man in the beast, while moderate labor ennobles the beast in the man.

The housing conditions of the proletariat have also a significance as regards criminality, and for the special group of sexual offenses their importance is very great. We shall speak of this more fully when we treat especially of these offenses, and will, for the moment, note simply their general consequences.

The disorder and squalor of the home communicate themselves to the inmates; the lack of room obliges the children to live, during a great part of the day, on the streets, with the result that they are brought into contact with all sorts of demoralizing companions. Finally, the living together of a great number of uneducated persons in one small dwelling is the cause of constant quarrels and fights. The situation of those who are merely night-lodgers is especially unfortunate, as we have already seen....

As has already been said at the beginning of those observations as to the influence of the economic life upon the development of social feelings on the part of the proletariat, the egoistic side of the human character is developed by the fact that the individual is dependent, that he lives in a subordinate position, and that he feels himself poor and deprived of everything. However, in so far as the proletarian sells his labor he is guaranteed against famine, however miserable his condition, and conscious of the utility of his role in society, he feels himself, notwithstanding his poverty, a man who, except for his employer, is independent of all men. But if work is not to be found, or if the proletarian, sick and infirm, is not able to work, it goes without saying that the resulting unemployment is very demoralizing. The lack of steady work, the horrors of the penury into which he and his fall, and the long train of evils which result from both, kill the social feelings in a man, for, as we have seen above, these feelings depend upon reciprocity. Let one familiarize himself with the thought of the condition of the man who lives in the greatest poverty, i.e. the man who is abandoned by all, and he will understand how egoistic must be the feelings of such.

From the position in which the proletarians find themselves it follows that, towards each other, it is rather the altruistic than the egoistic feelings that develop; living less isolated than the bourgeois, they see the misfortune that strikes their neighbor, and have felt the same themselves, and above all, their economic interests are not opposed. Forced idleness—at present chronic, and acute in times of panic—modifies these conditions at times; it makes competitors of the workers, who take the bread out of each other’s mouths.

The proletarian is never sure of his existence: like the sword of Damocles unemployment is constantly hanging over his head. Upon this subject Engels says:

> But far more demoralizing than poverty in its influence upon the English working man is the insecurity of his position, the necessity of living upon wages from hand to mouth, that in short which makes a proletarian of him. The smaller peasants in Germany are usually poor, and often suffer want, but they are less at the mercy of accident, they have at least something secure. The proletarian, who has nothing but his two hands, who consumes today what he earned yesterday, who is subject to every chance, and has not the slightest guarantee for being able to earn the barest necessities of life, whom every crisis, every whim of his employer may deprive of bread, this proletarian is placed in the most revolting, inhuman position conceivable for a human being. (Engels, "Condition of the Working Class in England," p. 76)

This uncertainty of existence is one of the reasons which explain why, in relatively prosperous times the workingman often spends his wages as soon as he receives them, for he knows that the economies possible to him are so small that he could never be saved from misery in case of unemployment.

Finally we must speak of ignorance and lack of training on the part of the proletariat, as a factor of criminality....

The first reason why ignorance and the lack of general culture must be ranked among the general factors of crime is this: the person who, in our present society, where the great majority of parents care very little for the education of their children, does not go to school, is deprived of the moral ideas (honesty, etc.) which are taught there, and ordinarily passes his time in idleness and vagabondage.

The second reason which makes ignorance a factor of crime, is that generally an ignorant man is, more than others, a man moved by the impulse of the moment, who allows himself to be governed by his passions, and is induced to commit acts which he would not have committed if his intellectual equipment had been different.

In the third place, it is for the following reasons that ignorance and the lack of training fall within the etiology of crime. The mind of the man whose psychic qualities, whether in the domain of the arts, or the sciences, have been developed, has become less susceptible to evil ideas. His intellectual condition constitutes thus a bridle which can restrain evil thoughts from realizing themselves; for real art and true science strengthen the social instincts....

The Lower Proletariat

In the preceding pages I have already spoken of the influence exercised by bad material surroundings upon a man's character; I have pointed out the moral consequences of bad housing conditions, and also that he becomes embittered and malicious through lack of the necessaries of life. All this applies to the proletariat in general, but much more strongly still to those who do not succeed, for any reason, in selling their labor, that is the lower proletariat.

If the dwellings of the working-class are bad, those of the lower proletariat are more pitiable still. There are, through sickness or lack of work, periods of dire poverty in the life of almost every worker—for the lower proletariat these periods are without intermission. Its poverty is chronic. And when the poverty makes itself felt for a long time together, the intellectual faculties become blunted to such a point that there remains of the man only the brute, struggling for existence.

Although the material and intellectual poverty of the lower proletariat is much greater than that of the proletariat, the difference between them is only quantitative. In one connection, however, there is also a qualitative difference, a very important one, namely that the working-man is a useful being without whom society could not exist. However oppressed he may be, he is a man who has a feeling of self-respect. It is different with the member of the lower proletariat. He is not useful, but a detriment. He produces nothing, and tries to live upon what others make; he is merely tolerated. He who has lived long in poverty loses all feeling of self-respect, and lends himself to anything whatever that will suffice to prolong his existence.

In short, poverty (taken in the sense of absolute want), kills the social sentiments in man, destroys in fact all relations between men. He who is abandoned by all can no longer have any feeling for those who have left him to his fate....

Conclusions

What are the conclusions to be drawn from what has gone before? When we sum up the results that we have obtained it becomes plain that economic conditions occupy a much more important place in the etiology of crime than most authors have given them.

First we have seen that the present economic system and its consequences weaken the social feelings. The basis of the economic system of our day being exchange, the economic interests of men are necessarily found to be in opposition. This is a trait that capitalism has in common with other modes of production. But its principal characteristic is that the means of production are in the hands of a few, and most men are altogether deprived of them. Consequently, persons who do not possess the means of production are forced to sell their labor to those who do, and these, in consequence of their economic preponderance, force them to make the exchange for the mere necessaries of life, and to work as much as their strength permits.

This state of things especially stifles men's social instincts; it develops, on the part of those with power, the spirit of domination, and of insensibility to the ills of others, while it awakens jealousy and servility on the part of those who depend upon them. Further the contrary interests of those who have property, and the idle and luxurious life of some of them, also contribute to the weakening of the social instincts.

The material condition, and consequently the intellectual condition, of the proletariat are also a reason why the moral plane of that class is not so high. The work of children brings them into contact with persons to associate with whom is fatal to their morals. Long working hours and monotonous labor brutalize those who are forced into them; bad housing conditions contribute also to debase the moral sense, as do the uncertainty of existence, and finally absolute poverty, the frequent consequence of sickness and unemployment. Ignorance and lack of training of any kind also contribute their quota. Most demoralizing of all is the status of the lower proletariat.

The economic position of woman contributes also to the weakening of the social instincts.

The present organization of the family has great importance as regards criminality. It charges the legitimate parents with the care of the education of the child; the community concerns itself with the matter very little. It follows that a great number of children are brought up by persons who are totally incapable of doing it properly. As regards the children of the proletariat, there can be no question of the education properly so-called, on account of the lack of means and the forced absence of one or both of the parents. The school tends to remedy this state of things, but the results do not go far enough. The harmful consequences of the present organization of the family make themselves felt especially in the case of the children of the lower proletariat, orphans, and illegitimate children. For these the community does but little, though their need of adequate help is the greatest.

Prostitution, alcoholism, and militarism, which result, in the last analysis, from the present social order, are phenomena that have demoralizing consequences.

As to the different kinds of crime, we have shown that the very important group of economic criminality finds its origin on the one side in the absolute poverty and the cupidity brought about by the present economic environment, and on the other in the moral abandonment and bad education of the children of the poorer classes. Then, professional criminals are principally recruited from the class of occasional criminals, who, finding themselves rejected everywhere after their liberation, fall lower and lower. The last group of economic crimes (fraudulent

bankruptcy, etc.) is so intimately connected with our present mode of production, that it would not be possible to commit it under another.

The relation between sexual crimes and economic conditions is less direct; nevertheless these also give evidence of the decisive influence of these conditions. We have called attention to the four following points.

First, there is a direct connection between the crime of adultery and the present organization of society, which requires that the legal dissolution of a marriage should be impossible or very difficult.

Second, sexual crimes upon adults are committed especially by unmarried men; and since the number of marriages depends in its turn upon the economic situation, the connection is clear; and those who commit these crimes are further almost exclusively illiterate, coarse, raised in an environment almost without sexual morality, and regard the sexual life from the wholly animal side.

Third, the causes of sexual crime upon children are partly the same as those of which we have been speaking, with the addition of prostitution.

Fourth, alcoholism greatly encourages sexual assaults.

As to the relation between crimes of vengeance and the present constitution of society, we have noted that it produces conflicts without number; statistics have shown that those who commit them are almost without exception poor and uncivilized, and that alcoholism is among the most important causes of these crimes.

Infanticide is caused in part by poverty, and in part by the opprobrium incurred by the unmarried mother (an opprobrium resulting from the social utility of marriage).

Political criminality comes solely from the economic system and its consequences.

Finally, economic and social conditions are also important factors in the etiology of degeneracy, which is in its turn a cause of crime.

Upon the basis of what has gone before, we have a right to say that the part played by economic conditions in criminality is preponderant, even decisive.

This conclusion is of the highest importance for the prevention of crime. If it were principally the consequence of innate human qualities (atavism, for example), the pessimistic conclusion that crime is a phenomenon inseparably bound up with the social life would be well founded. But the facts show that it is rather the optimistic conclusion that we must draw, that where crime is the consequence of economic and social conditions, we can combat it by changing those conditions....

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Willem Bonger and Cesare Lombroso were both writing in the same general time period. How do their theories of crime differ?
2. How does capitalism cause egoism and thus crime?
3. If Bonger were observing the United States today, what would he have to say about the nation's crime problem?
4. For Bonger, what is the solution to reducing crime?

22.
Crime in a Market Society*

Elliott Currie

In 1975, James Q. Wilson leveled a stinging attack on traditional sociological "thinking about crime" (Wilson, 1975; see also Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985). Wilson argued that the search for "root causes" of crime was a fool's errand: these causes either did not exist or, if they did, were beyond the control of the government. Social welfare policies would not, said Wilson, reduce crime. Instead, the solution was to use the one governmental resource that could blunt the crime rate if administered wisely: prisons. Because a relatively small group of offenders commit a disproportionately high amount of the serious crime, the key to decreasing lawlessness was to lock up the "wicked" among us. In essence, Wilson was proposing the policy of selective incapacitation.

Elliott Currie (1985, 1998) has been perhaps the most articulate progressive criminologist in responding to Wilson's reasoning—an important task given that Wilson's way of thinking would prove persuasive to conservative policymakers (see also Bennett et al., 1996). In Currie's view, the crime and policy analysis advanced by Wilson and similar conservative commentators is flawed in three important respects.

First, they have a misplaced faith in the idea that prisons are the solution to crime. Currie does not deny that some dangerous offenders must be incarcerated or that locking up over 2 million Americans has some effect on the crime rate. But he points out that the sixfold increase in prison populations in the last quarter of the twentieth century did not yield a sixfold decrease in crime; in fact, crime rates rose and then fluctuated in a way that was not closely connected with rates of incarceration. In particular, Currie (1985, 1998) claims that there is little evidence that nations that imprison the highest proportions of their citizens are the safest.

Second, Currie believes that Wilson's crime analysis is flawed because his social analysis is flawed. In particular, Currie contends that conservative commentators such as Wilson fail to confront the distorting effect that America's largely unfettered capitalist system—what he calls the "market economy"—has on those people who are losing in the Social Darwinist fight to survive economically. The nation's powerful economic engine produces enormous wealth but also considerable poverty. This wide inequality creates powerful criminogenic forces, such as childhoods spent amidst the ravages of poverty, whole segments of the labor force left without the ability to secure steady employment and a meaningful livelihood, the concentration of disadvantage and associated problems in deteriorating inner cities, and so on.

The effects of these harsh and unforgiving conditions might be blunted if the government were proactive in cushioning the suffering of its people. But the market economy has another dark side: its production of cultural values and political interests that oppose government intervention to help those in need. Thus, the market economy's emphasis on individual responsibility for failure, and its pressure on the state to reduce taxes and welfare budgets, means that social programs aimed at supporting at-risk citizens are constantly attacked as being "undeserving" and counterproductive. The result is disquieting. The combination of persisting high levels of inequality and of cutbacks in government support for the casualties of the market economy is a "toxic brew" that generates America's high rate of violent crime (see also Currie, 2009, 2013). The consequences of these conditions

are felt most deeply in minority communities. As Currie (2020 : 19) has recently noted, in the first two decades of this century, homicides have claimed the lives of more than 162,000 black Americans. The failure to respond forcefully to this epidemic of violence Currie terms a "peculiar indifference."

Third, Currie rejects Wilson's conclusion that, in essence, the government can do nothing about crime other than incarcerate more offenders. In his writings, Currie (1985, 1998, 2020) documents a variety of employment, early intervention, and criminal justice programs that have been shown to be effective and that, when taken together, could create a more "compassionate capitalism" within the United States. The nation's failure to embark vigorously on these programs reflects not the dearth of knowledge or of resources but the dominance of market society ideology and a lack of political will. The consequence of this policy approach to crime is that prisons continue to be filled to the brim, but serious violence in America remains an enduring problem (see Cullen, 2010).

References

Bennett, William J., John J. Dilulio, Jr., and John P. Walters. 1996. *Body Count: Moral Poverty and How to Win America's War Against Crime and Drugs*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Cullen, Francis T. 2010. "Elliott Currie: In Tribute to a Life Devoted to Confronting Crime." *Criminology and Public Policy* **9**: 19–27.

Currie, Elliott. 1985. *Confronting Crime: An American Challenge*. New York: Pantheon.

____. 1998. *Crime and Punishment in America*. New York: Metropolitan Books.

____. 2009. *The Roots of Danger: Violent Crime in Global Perspective*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

____. 2013. "The Market Economy and Crime." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 424–439. New York: Oxford University Press.

____. 2020. *A Peculiar Indifference: The Neglected Toll of Violence on Black America*. New York: Metropolitan Books.

Wilson, James Q. 1975. *Thinking About Crime*. New York: Vintage.

Wilson, James Q. and Richard J. Herrnstein. 1985. *Crime and Human Nature*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

In this paper I want to argue that it is precisely the extreme subordination of social life to the imperatives of what we rather inaccurately call the "market" that helps to explain not only the recent upsurge in violence in places like Russia and China, but also why the U.S. has long led the advanced industrial world in levels of serious violent crime —and why that unfortunate dominance continues in the face of unprecedented rates of incarceration which now surpass those of any other country in the world, advanced or otherwise, with the possible exception of Russia (Mauer, 1995).

---

* Republished with permission of SAGE Publications, from Theoretical Criminology: Market, Crime, and Community, Elliot Currie, 1, 2, 1997; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

The Idea of Market Society

I will argue that the varying levels of serious U.S. criminal violence across the "post-industrial" societies are closely tied to the greater or lesser growth of what I call "market society." By market society I don't just mean the existence of a market *economy*—but the spread of a civilization in which the pursuit of personal economic gain becomes increasingly the dominant organizing principle of social life; a social formation in which market principles, instead of being confined to some parts of the *economy*, and appropriately buffered and restrained by other social institutions and norms, come to suffuse the whole social fabric—and to undercut and overwhelm other principles that have historically sustained individuals, families and communities.

By market society, in other words, I don't mean "market" in quite the same way that is meant when economists talk about the "free" market—the idea of an economy in which everyone gets to compete on level terrain without government interference. That is part of the *ideology* of market society, but is decreasingly its reality. We don't have that kind of market economy in the U.S., which, again, is the traditional exemplar of market society among the advanced nations: we have an economy in which increasingly those better situated are able to *insulate* themselves remarkably well from the pressure of market forces.... What we *do* have in the U.S., however, and to a growing degree in Britain and many other advanced industrial countries, is a society in which most areas of social life—most of the major institutions through which we grow up, earn a living, care for our bodies and minds, and put a roof over our heads—are increasingly shaped by private decisions made in the service of the accumulation of private gain. And that is what I mean by market society.

Market societies, in short, are Darwinian societies, whether or not they can be said to be "free" in any meaningful sense. They are societies which, by definition, offer few cushions against the impact of disabilities or misfortunes in the labor market and minimal public provision of social services. At best they provide basic "safety nets" for the worst victims of economic insecurity, but even those are likely to be fragile and increasingly besieged as market society advances. They are "sink or swim" societies, at least for those unable to corral enough private resources to stay afloat.

I suggest that market society, as thus defined, is a particularly fertile breeding ground for serious violent crime.... Our uniquely devastating experience of serious violent crime, in short, reflects the equally unique extent to which the principles of market society have driven America's social and economic development and shaped its national culture. And that not only helps us understand the state of crime—and punishment—in the U.S. itself, but offers a cautionary tale for other countries tempted to follow a similar developmental path.

... No one much disputes the reality of a relative absence of institutions countering the unfettered expression of the market principle in American history. In modern industrial societies those countervailing institutions have been essentially of one of two kinds; borrowing from the American economist Richard Belous (1992: 1–3), we can call them "compassionate" and "keiretsu" forms of capitalism. "Compassionate" capitalism stresses social solidarity, equity and community values; it is historically a bottom-up development rooted in traditionally strong unions, as in Scandinavia (this is similar to Will Hutton's description of the operative principles of "social market" Europe). "Keiretsu" capitalism, on the other hand, is paternalistic rather than communitarian—top-down rather than bottom-up; and has its roots in that kind of corporate paternalism rather than in a strong labor movement: Japan being the classic example. But both systems may end up in somewhat similar places when it comes to protecting ordinary people against the forces of unfettered markets. Thus taxation is relatively low in the Japanese version of "keiretsu"

capitalism (or “peopleism,” in Hutton’s phrase); but so is inequality, and “human relations and the necessity of nurturing them are centre stage” (Hutton, 1995: 269).

Employment policy is a prime example of this rough convergence. Both Sweden, historically one of the most prominent exemplars of the compassionate model, and Japan, with a very different political history, have traditionally sought to keep workers employed even under the most adverse macroeconomic conditions. And both stand in stark contrast to the U.S. and some other exemplars of what Belous calls “contingent” capitalism, in which employers hire and fire at will and reject even the most modest government intervention in the labor market.

What makes the U.S. so distinct is that alone among post-industrial societies it has *neither* history—not the top-down but in many ways quite supportive corporatist tradition of a country like Japan, or the bottom-up, social-democratic buffers against the ravages of the market that strong labor movements and their allies successfully fought for in many European industrial countries—measures which are today, of course, under siege in many of them.

What does this have to do with violence? A great deal. This history means that the criminogenic effects of the market have traditionally been unleashed in the U.S. far more than in other advanced industrial societies. That is not to say that the U.S. is the only place they are found. Indeed part of my concern is precisely that they are becoming a familiar, even normalized part of the social landscape in many places around the world. But outside the Third World no country yet has experienced these effects in as concentrated and sustained a way as the U.S. And therein lies the core of our violence problem.

Market Society and Violent Crime

... There are at least seven of those profoundly criminogenic and closely intertwined mechanisms operating in "market society." They are not temporary aberrations, but—I would argue—intrinsic to the logic of market society itself....

1. First, *market society breeds violent crime by destroying livelihood*. It has sometimes been fashionable to argue that there are few if any connections between the labor market and crime. But the accumulating evidence strongly suggests otherwise. How individuals, families and communities fare in the labor market affects the potential for criminal violence in multiple and profound ways. On the level of individual aspirations and motivation, for example, the long-term absence of opportunities for stable and rewarding work, especially for the young, breeds alienation, undercuts the sense of having a "stake" in legitimate society, and exerts powerful pressures toward participation in illicit enterprises (Sullivan, 1985). Steady work provides one of the most important bonds that enable individuals to desist from early criminal careers (Sampson and Laub, 1993), and its absence helps explain why doing so is considerably harder for black youth in the U.S. than for their white counterparts (Elliott, 1994). Moreover, the absence of strong work opportunities undermines the effectiveness of programs to reintegrate offenders into the community, thus ensuring high rates of recidivism (Currie, 1985: Ch. 4). Long-term exclusion from stable work disrupts families and inhibits family formation in the first place (Wilson, 1987: Ch. 3), and diminishes the capacity of adults to perform credibly as role models and agents of socialization and the transmission of values to the young (Fagan et al., 1993). Less often discussed, but not less important, is the effect of *overwork* in poorly-paid jobs on the capacity of parents to provide a nurturing and competent environment for childrearing and on the capacity of communities for self-regulation and the maintenance of networks of mutual support and care. At the community level, the lack of opportunities for rewarding work breeds illicit enterprise, especially drug sales, which once established both increase the level of routine violence and weaken the community's capacity for supervision and support (Wilson, 1995). And mass exclusion from steady, well-paying work interacts with traditional gender norms to produce a broad stratum of men for whom violent means of asserting "manhood" flourish in the absence of conventional ones.

On all these counts, market society tends inherently to push the labor market in precisely the wrong directions. The fundamental problem is that in market society labor appears simply as a cost to be reduced rather than a social institution valuable in its own right—among other things, because of its capacity to promote social cohesion and personal integration. Accordingly, it is a central thrust of market society to seek to cheapen labor and/or eliminate it altogether. The result is a constant, systemic pressure toward the degradation of the labor market—through the proliferation of low-wage, high turnover jobs, endemic structural unemployment, or some combination of both. That is especially true in the context of the recurrent global overcapacity which market economies tend routinely to produce.

That combination, in fact, is what has most clearly characterized the U.S. labor market since the 1970s. The U.S. economy is often viewed as a highly successful "job machine," and its labor market policies have accordingly been widely held up as a model for the "rigid" economies of Europe to follow. But to the extent that the U.S. has indeed achieved higher job growth and lower measured unemployment than many (though not all) other advanced economies, it has been at the expense of wages and benefits—boosting the numbers of the "working poor" and creating a stratum of low-wage workers who are uniquely disadvantaged vis-à-vis their European counterparts. Thus, as of the late 1980s, as the economist Richard B. Freeman shows, men in the bottom decile of the U.S. earnings

distribution earned only 38% of the median wage, while their counterparts in the bottom decile in Europe averaged 68% and in Japan 61% of the respective medians. The lowest-paid American workers "have lower real earnings than workers in all advanced countries for which there are comparable data"—earning less than half, for example, of what the lowest-paid German workers earn (Freeman, 1994: 12–13). That helps explain higher U.S. levels of family poverty (about which more below), and also in its own right exacerbates the criminogenic effects of overwork on families and communities. Market society can indeed, apparently, create "jobs"—lots of them. But it cannot reliably create *livelihoods*.

Moreover, the relatively low rates of official unemployment in the U.S. obscure relatively *high* levels, on average, of *non*-employment in recent years (Balls, 1994)—as measured by the proportion of working-age men who have dropped out of the labor force.…

Market society, moreover, tends to exacerbate the criminogenic impact of weakening labor markets through its reluctance to cushion the economic impact of joblessness or to use public resources to generate new jobs and serious training for them. The comparative figures are stunning: At the beginning of the 1990s the U.S. was spending less than half of what even the British spent, just a quarter of what the Dutch spent, and *less* than a quarter of what the Swedes spent on labor market programs of all kinds. And a good part of what it *did* spend went for unemployment insurance. When it comes to programs to provide training and jobs outside the private labor market, these differences are much starker. Sweden spent eight times what the U.S. did, proportionately, on these "active" labor market programs (Reutersward, 1990).

2. The second—closely related—mechanism through which market society breeds violence is its *inherent tendency toward extremes of inequality and material deprivation*. The progressive elimination of good work (and the systematic resistance to an active employment policy) is part of the reason for that tendency. Another is the resistance of market societies against government intervention to offset the inadequacy of labor market incomes.

In the U.S., where "market" principles reign supreme in the absence of strong countervailing forces, income inequality has traditionally been more extreme than in other advanced societies; in the early 1980s, the share of the poorest fifth of the population in GDP was half again as high in West Germany and nearly *twice* as high in Sweden (Barr, 1992: 776). And those gaps widened substantially in the 1980s and 1990s, as the U.S. income distribution took a sharp turn toward increased inequality.…

The key reason for the wider spread of inequality in the U.S. is that the bottom is so far down, as recent data from the Luxembourg Income Study illustrate in sharp relief. At close to 22%, the child poverty rate in the U.S. towers above that of European countries—even relatively poor ones like Ireland (at about 12 percent). Child poverty rates are below 4% in Sweden, Belgium, Finland and Denmark; the closest competitors to the U.S. among advanced industrial nations are Canada and Australia, at roughly 14% (Rainwater and Smeeding, 1995, Table 2).…

Even more striking, from the LIS data, is the stark *inequality* in the economic condition of American children. Thus, in no European country do children in the *upper* fifth of the scale of real income match the income of comparable children in the U.S.: but only in Ireland (and Israel) are children's real incomes in the *lowest* fifth below those of the poorest American children. Poor children in the U.S., in short, are not only more numerous but also poorer than their European (or Canadian or Australian) counterparts, while the most affluent children in America are considerably *richer* than their counterparts in other advanced countries.…

What makes it troubling, among other things, is that both poverty and inequality are increasingly implicated in violent crime. Again, as with employment, the relationships are complex and some are indirect. Yet the evidence

points strongly to a profound role for both absolute and relative deprivation. How much poverty, and how wide a spread of inequality, a society tolerates *matter* in terms of violence, and this for several related reasons.

The evidence for a strong link between income inequality and homicide in particular is longstanding, and it comes from a variety of different kinds of research carried out across a variety of different settings (cf. Blau and Blau, 1982; Currie, 1985: Ch. 5; Messner, 1989; Gartner, 1990). Notably, one recent study finds a strong and specific association between the growth of wage inequality in the U.S. since the 1970s and levels of homicide and aggravated assault (Fowles and Merva, 1996). These connections are typically drawn in terms of some conception of relative deprivation. But there is also growing evidence that poverty itself—or more precisely a syndrome of multiple deprivation (what Land et al. have usefully called "resource deprivation")—is implicated in homicide generally (Land et al., 1990; Smith and Brewer, 1992) and in family homicides in particular (Goetting, 1995).

The long-term deprivation characteristic of market society generates high levels of violent crime in part because of its impact on child development. To begin with, the link between severe economic deprivation and child abuse is one of the strongest and most recurrent in the literature on child development (Sampson, 1993). In the U.S. the risk of reported physical child abuse is seven times higher in families making below $15,000 a year than in those making more (Cappelleri et al., 1993). Poverty's strong contribution to child abuse increases the level of criminal violence both directly, by increasing violence against children, and indirectly, through the intergenerational impact of abuse on later violence (Widom, 1992). At the same time, "persistent" poverty of the kind routinely generated by market society inhibits intellectual and social development among children and predisposes them toward school failure and later economic marginality (Miller and Korenman, 1993). The more years children spend in poverty, the more their measured intellectual development falls behind, even after other factors, like family structure, are controlled (Duncan et al., 1993).

3. But the lack of public supports to ameliorate the market's impact on the well-being of families and communities involves more than just income benefits alone. The third main mechanism by which market society breeds violent crime is by *weakening other kinds of public supports* that we have good reason to believe act as strong buffers against crime.

As with the problems of inadequate livelihood and economic deprivation, the problem is that market society is *intrinsically* antagonistic to the provision of the kinds of social supports that, as Frank Cullen (1994) has detailed, may act as critical inhibitors of serious crime. Because it is a basic operating principle of market society to keep the public sector small, it forces individuals and families to rely on individual efforts to secure some of the basics of healthy human development that less Darwinian societies, even poorer ones, provide much more reliably and accessibly. Poor but relatively generous societies, accordingly, are likely to do a better job at keeping violent crime low than wealthy but mean-spirited ones.

The withdrawal of public provision has especially devastating consequences when it is combined (as it invariably is in advanced market societies) with the broad structural shifts in the labor market I have noted above. The strains between family and work offer a key example. The adoption of low-wage, high-turnover labor market strategy that is an essential feature of "contingent" capitalism tends to undercut parents' ability to nurture and supervise their children, leading, in turn, to the kinds of problems that many versions of control theory warn us about. As wage levels fall and steady full-time work is replaced by the packaging of several part time and/or temporary jobs, parents in market societies increasingly need to work excessively long hours to make ends meet—which means that their children are likely to be deprived of attention and support. Reliable and affordable child-care facilities and after-school programs could ease that strain considerably; but market societies provide them spottily and grudgingly at best.

Here too, the figures differentiating the U.S. from the "compassionate capitalist" countries are stark and consistent. Just as we are the post-industrial nation with the most meager income support for low-income families, so too we have the least developed mechanisms to mitigate the stresses between work and childrearing. Virtually every other post-industrial nation provides nearly universal care for 3- to 5-year-olds, in one way or another, and all provide some form of paid parental leave (indeed a number of *developing* countries do better in this respect) (Kamerman and Kahn, 1995). Once again, the effects on violence are multiple and complex. The tendency of market society to force parents on to their own (often slim) resources puts children at great risk of abuse and neglect; it simultaneously increases the risks of domestic violence, as the paucity of outside supports for child care combine with weak job opportunities to trap women in abusive relationships.

This pattern, moreover, applies across the board to other public institutions that could play an important role in preventing violent crime. Widely accessible, high-quality preventive and prenatal health care, for example, might prevent some of the most basic physical and emotional traumas of childhood that we know are implicated in violent crime (Lewis et al., 1988). But the U.S. is also the only post-industrial nation without a national health system to deliver that care. (Those systems, of course, are increasingly under siege—in countries as diverse as Britain and Costa Rica as global market society advances.)

4. The withdrawal of *public* supports is compounded by the simultaneous tendency of market society to erode *informal* social supports and networks of care. This is especially a consequence of the rapid movement of capital and, accordingly, of opportunities for steady work in market society—which is characterized by the demand for "flexibility" in the workforce and by the absence of strong ties of capital to any geographic community. But what the system hails as "flexibility" from the point of view of the employer translates into rootlessness for individuals and families and atomization for communities. The result is to deplete the sources of informal support that might otherwise buffer the consequences of mass joblessness, poverty and the retreat of public social services.

If, for example, a family stressed by long working hours and unable to procure decent child care could lean on the grandparents down the street to care for the children; if they could look to uncles, cousins, and friends to help keep an eye on their teenagers when long working hours mean they can't do it themselves; then the criminogenic consequences of overemployment and poverty could arguably be mitigated. But market society systematically splits extended families and creates communities characterized by rapid geographical mobility and the consequent "thinning" of networks of close friendship and mutual care. The overall result is not unlike what social disorganization theorists have warned about since the 1920s, and recent research has repeatedly confirmed (see Sampson and Groves, 1989; Sampson, 1993; Cullen, 1994).

That "thinning" of community under the impact of market development is speeded by systematic private sector disinvestment—as the economic and social condition of the hardest-hit communities no longer suffices to justify investment in market terms—at least in the short term, which is, more and more, the operative time frame in market society. As market society progresses, in other words, we increasingly see communities with not only few *public* agencies—recreation programs, health clinics, libraries—but also few stores, restaurants or movie theatres.

The overall result is a deepening, self-fueling cycle of social impoverishment—what Jeffrey Fagan and his colleagues, in their recent multi-city study of crime, drugs and neighborhood change in the U.S., describe as a progressive "unraveling" of low-income communities. As these researchers point out, the resulting depletion of stable adult supervision and support means that youth gangs or drug dealers may become "the dominant informal control and socialization force" (Fagan et al., 1993: 4). More generally, it leaves youth more and more dependent for help, advice and role modeling on their peer groups and on an increasingly pervasive consumer culture (on which more below).

A second consequence is equally potent. As two decades of research make abundantly plain, it is precisely this sort of "social" impoverishment that is heavily implicated in severe child abuse and neglect—and which helps to explain why some low-income communities have much higher levels of child maltreatment than others (Zuravin, 1989; Garbarino and Kostelny, 1992; Sampson, 1993). It is important not to overstate this case. Even in the most "unraveled" parts of American (or Third World) cities, there remain strong families, at least some solid, longstanding communal institutions (in the U.S., notably churches); and often a handful of dedicated, if overextended, nonprofit social service agencies. But the overall drift of market society is increasingly to marginalize and, at the extreme, to overwhelm them.

5. Market society simultaneously breeds crime by *promoting a culture that exalts atomized and often brutal individual competition and consumption over the values of community, contribution and productive work*. The tendencies I have noted in the labor market, in levels of inequality, deprivation, social provision and support, are exacerbated by fundamental changes on the level of culture. Here the empirical reality is murkier and the changes harder to quantify. Yet I do not think we can adequately understand trends in crime in either the advanced or the developing world without paying these changes close attention. Market society is underpinned by a distinctive set of cultural values and norms—and as it develops, these come to push aside others which have traditionally helped communities to maintain social cohesion (and low levels of violence) in the face of economic deprivation and uncertainty.

We talk a great deal, especially in the U.S., about the links between crime and the culture of poor people. We talk hardly at all about the role of the *common* culture. There is much discussion—I think *too* much—of the culture of the underclass, but little about the culture of the *overclass* (for a fine critique of the "underclass" discussion, see Gans, 1995). That is a serious default, because we will simply not understand the character of violent crime in the contemporary world—perhaps especially youth violence—unless we view it within the context of the growth and spread of a dominant culture of exploitation, predation and indifference to human life in our time.

We can break down these developments into at least three distinct parts; first, the increasing potency and primacy of consumer values; second, and relatedly, the erosion of what I would call "craft" values; and finally the increasing institutionalization, or normalization, of a "mainstream" culture of exploitation and irresponsibility.

There is nothing new about the idea of the U.S. being an extreme example of a consumer society. What *is* new, I think, is the extent to which the other trends I have described have made young people, especially, more and more vulnerable to the appeals of a frantically consumerist culture. As we have decimated both formal and informal adult institutions of supervision, livelihood and support—and not just in poor communities—the culture's insistent proddings toward acquisition and consumption, through the advertising industry, television and the movies, are increasingly unmediated. We have some evidence for this shift that goes well beyond the anecdotal. In their recent multi-city study of drugs and crime in impoverished inner-city neighborhoods, for example, Jeffrey Fagan and his colleagues found a growing "materialism" in American inner cities—indeed, in some cities, what they describe as "hypermaterialism" (1993: 8). Nor is that phenomenon confined to drug-dealing youth gangs. Surveys have described a significant shift toward "consumption aspirations" among American adolescents generally during the 1980s; the proportion agreeing that "having lots of money" was one of their main goals in life rose from less than half in 1976 to nearly two-thirds a decade later (Crimmons et al., 1991).

A second underappreciated casualty of the spread of market culture is what I would call "craft" values—by which I mean the value of a job well done, the pleasure in productive work and creativity, the self-esteem that comes from acquiring competence and contributing your growing skills to an appreciative community. I can't measure this loss in neat numbers. But I am struck by it frequently in encounters with young people in general and delinquent youth in particular.

As market society advances, the value of work and its ability to bind individuals into a productive community life is progressively demeaned in favor of the valorization of consumption for its own sake—and of getting what you want, or getting ahead of others, by whatever means will suffice. When that cultural shift is combined with the decimation of opportunities for good work, it produces a dual assault on one of the most crucial mechanisms of social support, social control and communal engagement.

I'm suggesting, in other words, that the eclipse of stable and rewarding work in market society has, in addition to the economic and social consequences I have proposed above, a more subtle cultural one. Work stabilizes society in part through its cultural meaning—its ability to provide channels of status and esteem, and definitions of virtue and worth, that involve hierarchies of competence, diligence, and contribution. It allows for the valuing of productive means over consumerist ends, of contribution over position. One of the quieter, but I think extremely corrosive, effects of market society is to chip away at those cultural standards linking esteem to the capacity for production and contribution.

These considerations may also help explain why some poor communities manage to resist, at least for a while, the atomization and institutional disintegration that engulf others—and the accompanying levels of violence. In the U.S., that pattern is often found to be true of recent immigrant communities, as against those with a longer history of economic marginalization and longer exposure to a "hypermaterialist" dominant culture. Immigrant communities may retain strong elements of premarket values stressing family obligation and the dignity of work—values which, as a broad body of empirical research makes clear, tend to be worn down the longer immigrants reside in the U.S. and are buffeted by the onslaught of market values.

Another cultural development, equally difficult to quantify, but I think equally important in understanding the links between market society and violence, is what might be described as the spread of a culture of "normal brutality." This too, is by no means a new idea; it is prefigured in the work of a number of early criminological theorists. Around the turn of the century, for example, Enrico Ferri wrote that what he called the "law of free competition" was a "disguised form of cannibalism"—because it established, he said, the rule that "your death is my life" (1962: 84). That insight has transparent relevance for the problem of white-collar crime, but its implications are much broader. Market society promotes violent crime in part by creating something akin to a perpetual state of internal warfare in which the advancement of some is contingent on the fall of others, and in which a corresponding ethos of unconcern—of non-responsibility for others' well-being—often legitimized under the rubric of beneficent competition, pervades the common culture and the interactions of daily life.

A culture in which routinely throwing employees out of work in the name of "restructuring" is increasingly defined as thoroughly laudable business practice; where losing one's footing in the intensifying scramble for livelihood and income means more and more the possibility of falling into real social limbo; where even the most basic help for those who do "lose" is granted, if at all, grudgingly and with overt disrespect; where even the risks of disability or death from illness or accident are contingent on market income and basic health care may be withheld from those without it; where, in short, those on top continually make it clear that they have only minimal concern for the well-being of those on the bottom—is a society in which the risks of violent crime are magnified, because those on the bottom are likely to internalize and reciprocate the prevailing ethos of disregard.

The extraordinarily prescient Willem Bonger put it this way, early in the century: "He who is abandoned by all can no longer have any feeling for those who have left him to his fate" (1969: 53). We do not have much of a language for this phenomenon in contemporary criminological theory. But I don't think anyone who has spent much time with delinquent youth, repeat offenders or drug dealers in the inner cities of the advanced societies can have failed to be aware of their sense of society as a "dog-eat-dog" world. Market society's fundamental cultural attitude of nonresponsibility, in short, breeds a pervasive tendency toward "unbonding" from society of those most impacted by

economic and social insecurity and impoverishment—a sense that they are not merely deprived but maltreated. What we might call a "culture of callousness," in which concern for the well-being of other people becomes steadily attenuated, is not a "subculture" confined to "lower-class" youth, but a fundamental tendency of the *dominant* culture itself which poor youth assimilate and, no doubt, magnify, but cannot be said to initiate.

6. A sixth mechanism by which market society aggravates violent crime is by deregulating the *technology of violence*. I don't think this point needs much elaboration. The level of gun involvement in violent crime—especially homicide—in the U.S. is immense, and we won't understand the American pattern of violence apart from it. That is particularly true of the sharp rise in youth homicide that scarred the country in the late 1980s and early 1990s; from 1990 through 1994, 71% of black and 54% of white juvenile homicide victims were killed by firearms (Snyder et al., 1996: 3). There is much room for debate over how *much* of the difference in rates of homicide in the U.S. versus other advanced industrial countries can be laid to the prevalence of firearms—how many gun homicides, for example, might be carried out by other means if handguns were less easily available. If we simply subtract handgun homicides from the total, for example, the U.S. rate still towers above those of most European countries and Japan. But there is no serious dispute that the virtual absence of national-level regulations on the sale and possession of firearms both distinguishes the U.S. from virtually every advanced nation and contributes substantially to the lethality of American violence (Cook et al., 1995). Nor is there dispute that the modest recent national-level legislation establishing waiting periods for gun purchases and restricting military-style assault weapons have left vast areas of the firearms market for all practical purposes untouched, notably the so-called "secondary" firearms market of informal gun shows and private sales (Cook et al., 1995: 87–90).

What is less often acknowledged is how closely this absence of public regulation of firearms meshes seamlessly with the general "market" orientation of American civilization. The unique proliferation of firearms, especially handguns, in the U.S. is often attributed to its "frontier" culture, but though there is surely some truth in that explanation, by itself it is unconvincing. Canada is also a "frontier" society, but it regulates guns far more stringently than does the U.S. and suffers only a fraction of the level of handgun violence. I think the more salient distinction involves the varying historic dominance of market culture and institutions across these two countries, which is evident across many realms of culture and social policy. It cannot be entirely coincidental that Canada has both more stringent controls over the sale of guns and (so far) a much more generous "welfare state" than the U.S., or that Canada pioneered the kind of universal medical care system which the U.S. has fiercely and effectively resisted in the name of the "free market."

7. Finally, market society breeds violent crime by *weakening or eroding alternative political values and institutions* through which those it hurts most could make sense of their situation in progressive terms and take effective collective action against it.

We don't talk about this issue much in our recent thinking about violent crime. But it has a significant, if abbreviated, history in criminology. Recall that Robert Merton's fifth "adaptation" to the condition of social "strain" was "rebellion," which

> leads men [*sic*] outside the environing social structure to envisage and seek to bring into being a new, that is to say, a greatly modified social structure.

Crime was only one of several possible responses to a disjunction between socially structured means and culturally prescribed ends; political action to change either or both was another. But in order to "pass into organized political action," frustration with the existing social structure had to be translated into allegiance to "new groups possessed of a new myth"—thus transforming mere alienation into positive rebellion. That in turn required breaking the "monopoly of the imagination" imposed by what Merton called the "conservative myth"—the assertion that the

deprivation and inequality were inevitable in the nature of things or the result of individual failure rather than social structural constraints (1963: 155–7).

Merton himself did not elaborate much on this point, and it has been mostly forgotten since. But the central insight is crucially important. The way in which adverse social and economic conditions affect people's propensity to crime will obviously be mediated by the cultural ideologies and communal institutions available to them to respond to that adversity. Where strong labor movements or political parties address the concerns of low-income people, or strong ethnic or communal organizations are at hand to promote the collective well-being, the frustrations of social and economic deprivation are more likely to be channeled into constructive social action. But in "market" society those institutions are weak to nonexistent; in fact, it is precisely their weakness that allows market society to flourish to begin with. And as it progresses market society tends to erode them even further—witness the rapid decline of union membership in the U.S. (and many other advanced countries) in recent years, the casualty of market-driven deindustrialization and of concerted attacks by employers in legislatures and on the shop floor.

Why is this important for understanding violent crime? Because it leaves the people most "at risk" because of deprivation and social impoverishment with little means of constructively challenging the forces that are undermining their communities, families and futures—and thereby makes it far more likely that their response will take the form of an individual lashing-out, or a gratification of individual impulse at the expense of other people in the same boat. Over time, the withering of those countervailing institutions begins to deprive them of even the language, the conceptual framework, to define their problems in collective terms and to envision a collective response.

The Future

... I have argued that market society is peculiarly conducive to violent crime, for reasons that are analytically separable but, in the real world, closely intertwined and mutually reinforcing—operating simultaneously on the levels of material well-being, social support, and cultural meaning. Thus it is not just that market society increasingly forces a harsh choice of joblessness or low-wage labor, but that in doing so it exacerbates economic inequality and plunges large segments of its population into extreme deprivation—while simultaneously both withdrawing public provision of support and chipping away relentlessly at the informal support networks that might cushion these disadvantages. All the while it is also replacing earlier communal values and norms with an increasingly strident ethos of competitive consumerism which rubs raw the frustrations that accompany the declining economic fortunes of large strata of the population, and weakening the counter-ideologies and institutions that could mobilize constructive challenges to a harsh and depriving social order. To top it off, at the extreme such a civilization laxly regulates and opportunistically promotes the marketing of the mass instruments of lethal violence. It is a potent and toxic brew. And it is, again, a mixture intrinsic to the logic of market society—a function not of its failure but of "the quality of its success," as R. H. Tawney put it in the 1920s; "its light itself a kind of darkness" (1920: 33)....

This is not the place to go into the details of what would be required to deflect this trajectory. But a few points seem clear. I have argued that market society generates several analytically separable mechanisms through which it exacerbates the problem of serious violent crime. But these are not really separable in the real world, and some of them are more central than others. In particular, it is the systematic assault on steady livelihood that is arguably the most destructive feature of the advance of market society, and the one with the most diverse and potent ramifications for families and communities; it is, therefore, also the most promising lever for change. Full employment at socially meaningful work at good wages, and with reasonable hours, at a stroke attacks many of the criminogenic features of market society—integrating individuals into a larger social purpose, stabilizing local communities, and guaranteeing sufficient income. It makes illicit markets less appealing and reduces the kinds of family stresses that put smaller children at risk of abuse and weaken the supervision of older ones.

Building that kind of strategy, in the face of the technological changes now transforming work across the globe, means moving in two directions at once (see Currie, 1995): substantially expanding employment in the public and nonprofit sectors of the economy, and developing policies for worksharing and reduction of work time. Both are worthy in themselves, but both also have enormous potential for reducing violence. If we spread work and reduce work time, we not only widen access to livelihood among people who are now cut off from the integrative and supportive effects of stable work, but we also lessen the destructive impact of *overwork*. If we invest in public-sector job creation, we provide new livelihoods for many people the private market will not employ—and we can also staff the public agencies of social support and capacity-building which market society erodes if left to its own devices: health and mental health care, public schooling, child care and skill training. An active employment policy geared to creating new jobs in the public and nonprofit sectors, in short, meshes powerfully with a commitment to the universal provision of high-quality public services; and that combination can be the core of an effective attack on the conditions that breed violent crime.

Such is the state of public discourse on these matters in most of the developed world today that calls for revitalizing an active employment strategy along these lines are sometimes dismissed as Utopian. But there is considerable evidence that it is both eminently feasible (Glyn and Rowthorn, 1994) and capable of attracting strong public support. Even in the U.S., a substantial majority, according to opinion polls, agrees that government should

guarantee work for those the private economy will not or cannot hire. Criminologists need to add their voices to what should become a broad and public debate over the nature of work and of social support in the advanced societies of the 21st century. They can do so best by affirming that violence is one of the clearest costs of our increasingly heedless global assault, in the name of the market, on the preconditions of a sustaining social life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the "market economy"? How does it produce inequality and the conditions that are conducive to high rates of violent crime in the United States?
2. Compared to other advanced industrial nations (e.g., Japan, western European countries), is the U.S. government more or less supportive of its citizens who are in need? Why does Currie think this is the case? What does he believe are the consequences of these government policies?
3. How is Currie's "market society" theory similar to Messner and Rosenfeld's "institutional-anomie" theory? How do the theories differ?
4. What policies would Currie's perspective on crime suggest are likely to reduce crime? What policies would Currie believe would not reduce crime?

23.
The Concept and Theory of State-Corporate Crime*

Ronald C. Kramer

Raymond J. Michalowski

David Kauzlarich

In the last quarter of the 20th century, criminologists increasingly focused on the crimes of the powerful. They wanted to explode the myth that crime was monopolized by the poor and found only in inner-city neighborhoods. Writing in the Sutherland (1940; see Chapter 8) tradition, they noted that white-collar crime was rampant (Van Slyke et al., 2016). Critical criminologists were particularly concerned with one type of upperworld illegality: corporate crime.

As the most influential actors in a capitalist society, these business entities had the potential to do not only enormous good but also enormous harm (Cullen et al., 2006). Corporations have been intimately involved in numerous billion-dollar financial scandals that rocked the economy—such as the Savings and Loan Industry, the Enron collapse, and the banking crisis and housing bubble of 2008—often with little criminal punishment (Coffee, 2020). As Jeffrey Reiman (1979) famously titled his book, The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison. *Less visible but more consequential, unsafe practices such as violating worker safety standards, marketing defective products, and polluting the environment have exacted high physical costs. Phrased differently, corporations can be violent (Cullen et al., 2006).*

Although given less attention, critical criminologists also illuminated how another powerful institution in society—the "state" or government—could engage in harmful conduct. In his 1988 Presidential Address to the American Society of Criminology, William Chambliss (1989 : 184) called attention to "state-organized crime"—or illegal acts "committed by state officials in the pursuit of their job as representatives of the state." He documented how U.S. intelligence agencies, in hopes of advancing perceived national interests, have engaged in drug and arms smuggling, assassinations and murders, illegal medical experiments on unknowing subjects, and undercover operations aimed at disrupting antiwar and civil rights protest movements.

Building on these two themes—corporate crime and state crime—Ronald Kramer and his associates have identified an important category of offending: state-corporate crime *(see also Kramer, 2020). Rather than acting as independent criminal agents, they note that as the two most powerful institutions in the nation, the state and corporations can collude to break the law. Business and government often have an ongoing relationship that can lead them to place their mutual interests above the welfare of workers, consumers, and the general public. In the selection to follow, they identify two types of state-corporate crime.*

First, state-initiated corporate crime *"occurs when corporations, employed by the government, engage in organizational deviance at the direction of, or with the tacit approval of, the government" (Kramer et al., 2002 : 271). A prominent example discussed by Kramer et al. is the explosion of the Space Shuttle* Challenger *on January 28, 1986, which claimed the lives of seven members, including New Hampshire teacher Christa McAuliffe. The*

ostensible cause was the failure of an O-ring, a rubber-like seal (like a large washer) in between four Solid Rocket Boosters, which hardened due to cold weather and allowed fuel leakage leading to structural failure. The decision to launch was controversial because engineers at Morton Thiokol, the company that manufactured the boosters, opposed doing so due to concern over low temperatures (36 degrees Fahrenheit). They were overruled by company managers, resulting in the deaths of seven people. What makes this a state-initiated offense is that NASA officials allegedly pressured Thiokol's upper-level management to ignore the potential hazards and approve the launch. As a government agency needing funding, NASA itself had to show the Reagan administration that its space shuttle program could launch private, military, and scientific payloads into space regularly, employing a reusable shuttle. In short, it had to be cost effective, creating strong incentives to keep on schedule and not delay Challenger's *launch. To protect their organizational interests, Thiokol and NASA engaged in what proved to be reckless conduct that had lethal and preventable consequences (see also Vaughan, 1996).*

Second, state-facilitated corporate crime *"occurs when government regulatory institutions fail to restrain deviant business activities, either because of direct collusion between business and government or because they adhere to shared goals whose attainment would be hampered by aggressive regulation" (Kramer et al., 2002 : 271–272). A prominent example, discussed by Kramer et al., is the September 3, 1991, fire at Imperial Food Products, Inc., a chicken-processing plant in Hamlet, North Carolina (see Aulette and Michalowski, 1993). Twenty-five people perished, in large part because the plant had no sprinklers, no windows, and a fire-exit door chained shut to stop employees from pilfering product. The company owner did not go unpunished, serving a 4½-year prison sentence. But he, alone, was not to blame for this crime. This offense was also state-facilitated because the unsafe working conditions were made possible by a permissive state regulatory environment intended to be business friendly. The North Carolina OSHA had not inspected the 100-year-old plant in over a decade, and it returned nearly a half million dollars in unused funds to the federal government shortly before the fire. The state was complicit. Safety standards simply were not enforced, and workers died as a result.*

Finally, Kramer and his colleagues outline a framework for the development of a theory of state-corporate crime (see Table 23.1). Criminogenic sources derive from three levels: the institutional environment (the social-political context), the organization itself (corporate or government), and the interaction among individuals. What they call "catalysts for action" fall into three categories, which would pertain to almost any criminal offense. First, there are factors that create the motivation or propensity to violate the law. Second, there are factors that provide the illegitimate means or opportunity to offend. And third, there are factors that weaken or strengthen controls over potential illegalities, making them more or less likely (see Coffee, 2020).

TABLE 23.1 An Integrated Theoretical Model of State-Corporate Crime

Level of Analysis	Catalysts for Action		
	Motivation	**Opportunity Structure**	**Operationality of Control**
Institutional environment (history, political economy, culture)	Culture of competition Economic pressure Organizational goals Performance emphasis	Availability of legal means Obstacles & constraints Blocked goals/strain Availability of illegal means Access to resources	International reactions Political pressure Legal sanctions Media scrutiny Public opinion Social movements
Organizational (structure and process)	Corporate culture Operative goals Subunit goals Managerial pressure	Instrumental rationality Internal constraints Defective SOPs Creation of illegal means Role specialization Task segregation Computer, telecommunication, and networking technologiesNormalization of deviance	Culture of compliance Subcultures of resistance Codes of conduct Reward structure Safety & quality control procedures Communication processes

Level of Analysis	Catalysts for Action		
	Motivation	**Opportunity Structure**	**Operationality of Control**
Interaction (face-to-face interaction, individual action)	Socialization Social meaning Individual goals Competitive individualism Material success emphasis	Definitions of situation Perceptions of availability & attractiveness of illegal means	Personal morality Rationalizations & techniques of neutralization Separation from consequences Obedience to authority Group think Diffusion of responsibility

Source: From *Crimes of the American Nuclear State: At Home and Abroad,* by David Kauzlarich and Ronald C. Kramer. Copyright 1998 by David Kauzlarich and Ronald C. Kramer. Reprinted with the permission of Northeastern University Press.
Note: SOPs = standard operating procedures.

References

Aulette, Judy R. and Raymond Michalowski. 1993. "Fire in Hamlet: A Case Study of State-Corporate Crime." In Kenneth D. Tunnell (ed.), *Political Crime in Contemporary America*, pp. 171–206. New York: Garland.

Chambliss, William J. 1989. "State-Organized Crime—The American Society of Criminology, 1988 Presidential Address." *Criminology* **27**: 183–208.

Coffee, John C., Jr. 2020. *Corporate Crime and Punishment: The Crisis of Underenforcement*. New York: Berrett-Koehler.

Cullen, Francis T., Gray Cavender, William J. Maakestad, and Michael L. Benson. 2006. *Corporate Crime Under Attack: The Fight to Criminalize Business Violence*, 2nd edition. Cincinnati, OH: Anderson/LexisNexis.

Kramer, Ronald C. 2020. *Carbon Criminals, Climate Criminals*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Kramer, Ronald C., Raymond J. Michalowski, and David Kauzlarich. 2002. "The Origins and Development of the Concept and Theory of State-Corporate Crime." *Crime and Delinquency* **48**: 263–282.

Reiman, Jeffrey H. 1979. *The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison*. New York: John Wiley.

Sutherland, Edwin H. 1940. "White-Collar Criminality." *American Sociological Review* **5**: 1–12.

Van, Slyke Shanna R., Michael L. Benson, and Francis T. Cullen, eds. 2016. *The Oxford Handbook of White-Collar Crime*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Vaughan, Diane. 1996. *The Challenger Launch Decision: Risky Technology, Culture, and Deviance at NASA*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

* Reprinted with permission from: Ronald C. Kramer, Raymond J. Michalowski, and David Kauzlarich. 2002. "The Origins and Development of the Concept and Theory of State-Corporate Crime." *Crime & Delinquency* 48: 263–282.

The Creation of the Concept of State-Corporate Crime

The concept and theory of state-corporate crime owes much to Quinney's examination of the construction of political power in a capitalist state. It accepts that there is a class of powerful elites composed of investors and state and corporate managers, that these elites are more able than others to have law and law enforcement reflect their interests and worldview, and that the intersection of corporate and governmental interests does simultaneously increase the likelihood of social harm while decreasing the likelihood that these harms will be criminalized or aggressively controlled in some other way.

Whereas Quinney's radical criminology stimulated a general interest in the critical issues that the concept and theory of state-corporate crime are concerned with, the specific source of the development of the concept was a case study of the space shuttle Challenger disaster….

As Kramer worked on the Challenger study, it became apparent that the disaster was the collective product of the interaction between two separate organizations: The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), a government agency, and Morton Thiokol, Inc., a private business corporation. The fact that these two organizations had acted together in this case to produce a serious social harm suggested that a more general conceptualization of deviant interorganizational relationships between business corporations and government agencies was needed. At the 1989 Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) meeting in Berkeley, Kramer discussed the issue with Ray Michalowski. It was Michalowski's suggestion to label the phenomena *state-corporate crime*. Kramer liked the concept and began using it in his work on the Challenger case and in his writings more generally on organizational crime…. Kramer defined state-corporate crime in the following way:

> State-corporate crime is defined as an illegal or socially injurious social action that is the collective product of the interaction between a business corporation and a state agency engaged in a joint endeavor. These crimes involve the active participation of two or more organizations, at least one of which is private and one of which is public. They are the harmful result of an interorganizational relationship between business and government. (p. 1)

… Kramer and Michalowski (1990) went on to note that despite its ubiquity, the structural relations between corporate and governmental organizations had been relatively peripheral to the study of corporate crime. Instead, two nearly independent bodies of research had developed. Theory and research in the area of corporate crime had concentrated primarily on organizational deviance within private business corporations. Paralleling that work but seldom intersecting with it, others had examined crimes and malfeasance by governments, what Chambliss (1989) had called "state-organized crime." Kramer and Michalowski suggested that many forms of organizational deviance are generated at the interstices of corporations and government. They used the term *state-corporate crime* to denote these forms of organizational deviance….

State-Initiated and State-Facilitated Corporate Crime

Kramer and Michalowski (1993) asserted that state-corporate crime can take two distinct forms. One is state-initiated corporate crime and the other is state-facilitated corporate crime. State-initiated corporate crime (such as the Challenger explosion) occurs when corporations, employed by the government, engage in organizational deviance at the direction of, or with the tacit approval of, the government. State-facilitated corporate crime (such as the Imperial Food Products fire in Hamlet) occurs when government regulatory institutions fail to restrain deviant business activities, either because of direct collusion between business and government or because they adhere to shared goals whose attainment would be hampered by aggressive regulation.

As a sensitizing concept, the term *state-corporate crime* has three useful characteristics. First, it directs attention toward the way in which deviant organizational outcomes are not discreet acts but rather the product of the relationships between different social institutions. Second, by focusing on the relational character of the state (Wonders & Solop, 1993), the concept of state-corporate crime foregrounds the ways in which horizontal relationships between economic and political institutions contain powerful potentials for the production of socially injurious actions. This relational approach provides a more nuanced understanding of the processes leading to deviant organizational outcomes than approaches that treat either businesses or governments as closed systems. Third, the relational character of state-corporate crime also directs us to consider the vertical relationships between different levels of organizational action: the individual, the institutional, and the political-economic. This point leads toward the development of a theory of state-corporate crime.

Toward The Development of A Theory of State-Corporate Crime

In addition to presenting an important revision of the concept of state-corporate crime, the Kramer and Michalowski (1990) American Society of Criminology paper also introduced an integrated theoretical framework that can be used to analyze organizational offenses like state-corporate crimes. They noted that at that time there were three major theoretical approaches to the study of corporate crime, and each corresponded to a different level of social action. The first was differential association theory, as developed by Sutherland (1940, 1949/1961). The second was based on organizational theory, which argued that organizations could be criminogenic either due to the performance emphasis on goals (Finney & Lesieur, 1982; Gross, 1978; Kramer, 1982) or as a result of defective standard operating procedures (Hopkins, 1978). This organizational approach would eventually be merged with an anomie perspective (Passas, 1990; Vaughan, 1982, 1983, 1997) on corporate crime. The third approach located the criminogenic forces in the wider political economic structure of capitalism (Barnett, 1981; Michalowski, 1985; Quinney, 1977; Young, 1981). Differential association addressed the individual level of action; organizational theory focused on specific institutional factors promoting or retarding corporate crime; and political-economic or radical approaches examined the way broad, preexisting societal characteristics interact with the individual and organizational levels of action.

Although the differential association, organizational, and political economic perspectives represented divergent approaches to explaining corporate and government crime, Kramer and Michalowski (1990) argued that they can be brought together into an integrated theoretical framework. The structure, dynamics, and cultural meanings associated with the political economic arrangements of any particular society will shape the goals and means of economic and political organizations, as well as the constraints they face. The organizational level of analysis links the internal structure of specific economic or political units with the external political-economic environment on one hand, and with the way in which the work-related thoughts and actions of the individuals who occupy positions in those units are conditioned by the requirements of the positions they hold and the procedures of the organization on the other hand. Differential association, by focusing on the social relations that give meaning to individual experience, directs us to examine the symbolic reality derived from social interaction within bounded organizational niches.

Table 23.1, created by Kramer and Michalowski (1990) and revised by Kauzlarich and Kramer (1998), presents an analytic framework for this integrated theory of organizational deviance. This framework links the three levels of analysis discussed above with three catalysts for action. These catalysts are (a) motivation or performance pressure, (b) opportunity structure, and (c) the operationality of control. This framework is designed to indicate the key factors that will contribute to or restrain organizational deviance at each intersection of a catalyst for action and a level of analysis.

This theoretical framework is based on the proposition that criminal or deviant behavior at the organizational level results from a coincidence of pressure for goal attainment, availability and perceived attractiveness of illegitimate means, and an absence of effective social control. The first catalyst for action is the emphasis on goal attainment. Political and economic structures, organizations, and individuals may place greater or lesser emphasis on the attainment of rationalized goals as the engine for social action. Thus, a highly goal-oriented individual, working in an organization that evaluates performance strictly on goal attainment by its workers in a society whose cultural and

institutional framework emphasizes goal attainment above all else, will be more susceptible to pursuing deviant organizational strategies than if one or more of these conditions is absent.

The second catalyst for action suggests that organizational deviance is more likely in a society where legitimate means are scarce relative to goals. The likelihood of deviance increases for those organizations or organizational subunits where the allocation of means by the internal structure is inadequate relative to the organization's goals, increasing the likelihood that individuals will perceive themselves to be blocked from access to legitimate means and will subsequently seek deviant alternative routes.

Finally, the operationality of social control at all three levels will serve as both an important restraint on organizational deviance and a critical element in constructing symbolic frameworks that will operate at the societal, organizational, and personal levels as time passes. Thus, societies with high operationality of social control are more likely to produce organizations with strong corporate cultures favoring compliance with laws and regulations. Individuals who function in these organizations in such a society will be more likely to develop forms of personal morality that would mitigate against engaging in organizational deviance.

By its very nature, state-corporate crime directs us to examine the linkages between levels of analysis and catalysts for action. When the topic is profit-oriented violations of law by some business, it is possible, although not necessarily sufficient, to treat the crime as organizationally self-contained. Injurious social actions that result from concerted actions by organizations operating in different social spheres (e.g., production vs. governance), however, require that we must expand the frame of analysis, and that is what this theoretical framework attempts to do….

Research on State-Corporate Crime

Kramer published the first case study of state-corporate crime in Kip Schlegel and David Weisburd's 1992 anthology *White-Collar Crime Reconsidered* (a book that grew out of the 1990 Sutherland Conference on White Collar Crime at Indiana University). At the time, most people viewed the Challenger disaster simply as an accident. In his paper, however, Kramer explained how state and corporate actors (NASA and Morton Thiokol) interacted with one another to produce risky decision-making processes and unsafe actions that resulted in the death of six astronauts and school teacher Christa McAuliffe.

Although the technical cause of the explosion was the failure of the O-ring seal in a field joint of a solid rocket booster, larger structural and organizational factors shaped the decision making in such a way as to make the disaster more probable (for a later and more comprehensive analysis of the Challenger disaster, see Vaughan, 1996). Kramer's case study illustrated the usefulness of a multidimensional empirical analysis, as the case is best understood at points where institutional and organizational forces conjoin with cultural and definitional processes to produce conditions favorable to organizational crime....

The Kramer ... [paper] examined ... state-initiated, state-corporate crime, as the state ... was consciously and explicitly involved in acts of crime commission. The next ... published case [study] of state-corporate crime focused on state-facilitated crimes.

Like the previously reviewed case studies, Aulette and Michalowski (1993) examined another disastrous conjoining of state and corporate interests. On September 3, 1991, an explosion and fire at the Imperial Food Products chicken processing plant in Hamlet, North Carolina, killed 25 workers and injured another 56. The technical cause of the fire was the rupture of a hydraulic line near a deep fryer that resulted in a fireball that quickly swept through the chicken processing plant. Why did so many people die and become injured by the fire? Most immediate, it was because the company routinely locked several of its fire doors, effectively sealing off many potential exits from the flames and smoke. The company later said that it had locked the fire doors to prevent employee theft of chicken and to keep flies out of the factory. But much more than these physically proximate causes and the larger drive for capital accumulation, the deaths and injuries were a product of a series of local, state, and federal crimes of omission that can be directly tied to the fate of the workers at the plant. For example, the state of North Carolina refused to support the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) endeavors that would have made places like Imperial Foods safer for workers, even doing so little that it actually returned nearly a half a million dollars in unspent OSHA money to the federal government just prior to the fire. Also, a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspector admitted that he knew of the company's practice of locking doors (potential fire escapes) but thought that he had no authority to do anything about it. Furthering the tragic irony, another USDA inspector actually approved of the locking of doors because he thought that it would prevent flies from contaminating the chicken inside the plant. In these ways and others (e.g., the failure of local, regional, and federal polity and assorted regulatory bodies), the worker deaths were facilitated by state inaction and negligence.

State-facilitated, state-corporate crimes like those in Hamlet involve elements of both crime commission and omission, and as such are likely to be one of the least recognizable forms of state involvement in crime. Yet injury that is tacitly allowed or mildly encouraged by the state fills the world with as much injury and suffering as those that are explicitly triggered by conspiring corporate and governmental elites....

Conclusion

The concept and theory of state-corporate owes a heavy intellectual debt to the kind of theorizing and research conducted by Richard Quinney.... Work on state-corporate crime has been largely inspired by Quinney's vision of a criminology that not only takes the crimes of powerful individuals seriously but also harmful organizational and institutional practices that result from economic and political stratification in advanced capitalist societies. Institutional and organizational arrangements reflecting economic inequality can and do produce criminogenic patterns and practices, even when they are tacit or latent results of normative economic and political processes. In the cases reviewed here, it is also noteworthy that the major regulatory/social control bodies were inadequate because they were either guided by elites or working directly or indirectly for elite interests. The theory of state-corporate crime suggests that formal social control is but one, and perhaps the least effective, way to control organizational crime and deviance. Real control must grow from social movements, grass-root activities, a truly aggressive and inquisitive media, and most important, open and democratic participation in the political process. Furthermore, the tragedies reviewed here were made more likely by the lethal mix of apathy, disinformation, secrecy, and a reliance on elite regulation of elites.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is state-corporate crime?
2. What is the difference between state-initiated and state-facilitated corporate crime? Which type is the Space Shuttle *Challenger* case? Which type is the Imperial Food Products, Inc., fire case?
3. Why would critical criminologists be interested in state-corporate crime? What might it have to do with their concern over power in society?
4. Take any state-corporate crime. Then try to explain why it occurred using the theoretical framework outlined by Kramer and his colleagues.
5. Do you think that critical criminologists will use the concept of state-corporate crime to explain corruption that might have occurred during the administration of President Trump? Might ignoring "climate change" be a case in point?

PART VIII

FEMINIST THEORIES: GENDER, POWER, AND CRIME

Francis T. Cullen
University of Cincinnati

Robert Agnew
Emory University

Pamela Wilcox
Pennsylvania State University

For much of its history, criminology as a discipline focused almost exclusively on crimes committed by men. Most empirical studies used data only on male offenders, and theories were constructed to explain why boys and men broke the law (Belknap, 1996; Leonard, 1982; Sharp, 2009; Simon, 1975; Smart, 1977; Steffensmeier and Broidy, 2001). Part of the neglect of females stemmed from the disproportionate involvement of males in crime, especially serious offenses, and from the overwhelming maleness of the prison population. Women's criminality thus was seen as tangential to the crime problem—as not really worth investigating and as having no implications for the understanding of males' illegality. A more salient reason for the failure to consider gender in criminological analyses, however, was that, as was the case in other academic disciplines, criminologists were nearly all men: males were studying and writing about males.

Equally disquieting, on those infrequent occasions when female criminals received scholarly attention, the resulting analyses were decidedly sexist. Although exceptions existed (Steffensmeier and Clark, 1980), prominent scholars often viewed female criminality as a departure from "natural" female behavior—that is, maternal, passive, and gentle. What would cause such "odd," "unfemale" behavior? Female lawbreakers, it was thought, could only have contravened their feminine nature because of a pathological defect in their biological makeup or within their psyche (Klein, 1973; Smart, 1977). The traditional female role thus was seen as normal; any departure, such as crime, was seen as abnormal. In this perspective, social factors, especially gender-based inequality, were accorded little or no causal importance in the behavior of women—or, for that matter, in the behavior of men.

Starting in the 1970s and continuing to this day, such male-centered, asocial theorizing has been challenged as sexist and as theoretically impoverished. A revisionist approach, which elevated gender to the center of theoretical analysis, was fueled in important ways by the emergence of the Women's Movement and its fight for equality between the sexes. This movement had two noteworthy effects. First, as educational and occupational opportunities broadened, increasing numbers of women entered the field of criminology, bringing with them fresh insights rooted in personal histories unlike those of male criminologists. Second, the Women's Movement focused attention on the social situation of women vis-à-vis men, including such crucial issues as gender-based differences in socialization and

inequalities in power. For many criminologists—especially female scholars—the idea that gender was not implicated in crime and criminal justice now seemed incongruous.

The rejection of male-centered traditional criminology has resulted in the emergence of the competing paradigm of "feminist criminology." In this approach, sex is not simply another variable added to a multivariate empirical analysis (usually as a "control" variable). Rather, gender relations become central to understanding human behavior, including crime. There is a special focus on how crime is related to gender-based inequality between males and females. Finally, to a greater or lesser extent, feminist analyses—similar to those of critical criminology—are oriented to the production of knowledge so as to unmask and change the structural relationships in society that result in the discrimination against and the oppression of women (see Chesney-Lind, 2006; Daly, 2010; Daly and Chesney-Lind, 1988; see also Miller and Mullins, 2006; Ollenburger and Moore, 1998; Sharp, 2009).

Feminist criminologists directed attention to several major questions about the causes of crime. First, how can we explain female crime? Some criminologists argue that traditional crime theories are equally applicable to males and females (e.g., Jensen and Eve, 1976; Smith and Paternoster, 1987), but feminist criminologists argue that new theories need to be developed to explain female crime or that traditional theories need to be revised in ways that accord a central role to gender. Second, how can we explain the gender gap in crime and, related to this, changes in the gender gap over time? Gender is one of the strongest correlates of crime, with rates of serious crime being many times higher among males than females (Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 2004; Steffensmeier and Allan, 2000). The size of the gender gap has decreased for certain crimes in recent decades (see Heimer, 2000), although there is some debate over the extent to which this is due to such things as changing police practices (see Chesney-Lind, 2006; Lauritsen et al., 2009; Rennison, 2009; Schwartz et al., 2009). Until the 1970s and 1980s, little effort was devoted to explaining these facts. Third, what role does gender play in the generation of male crime? While traditional theories were developed with males in mind, such theories devote little attention to the role of gender in producing male crime. Finally, how does gender "intersect" with race/ethnicity and class to affect crime (see Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Corsaro et al., 2015; Miller, 2008; Simpson and Gibbs, 2006)? Feminist criminologists have increasingly come to argue that a full understanding of crime requires that we consider gender by race/ethnicity and by class groups (e.g., examine poor, white females separately from middle-class, African American females).

It is important to emphasize, however, that there is a diversity of thinking within feminist criminology, as well as a dynamism that leads to continuing theoretical developments (for an analysis of recent contributions, see Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 2004; Daly, 1997, 2010; Davidson and Chesney-Lind, 2009; Miller and Mullins, 2006, 2009; Schwartz and Steffensmeier, 2015; Sharp, 2009). Over the past three decades, the most poignant split has been between "liberal feminists," who focus on the salience of sex-role socialization and equality of opportunities, and feminists who take a more "critical" or "radical" approach, emphasizing structural inequality in power between men and women. These latter theorists see male and female crime as fundamentally linked to patriarchy—a deeply entrenched system in which males exert dominance through their power (financial and, if necessary, physical) and through a hegemonic culture that defines male ways of doing things as "normal" and male control of women as legitimate. In general, liberal feminist views had the most powerful influence in the earlier days of feminist criminological scholarship, while more radical approaches currently direct most theory and research within the feminist paradigm.

Liberation and Crime

As the Women's Movement grew in strength and swept across the nation, it was tempting to conclude that substantial equality between men and women was within reach. Although gender socialization and inequalities ultimately would prove difficult to transform, significant social changes did occur. Almost on a daily basis, it seemed, women were breaking one social or occupational barrier after another. Witnessing these changes in progress, it became almost inevitable to ask, How will this refashioning of the experiences of women affect their criminality? For those with a sociological imagination who saw male crime as rooted in their social experiences, the answer seemed clear. If girls were raised like boys and if in their life course they had the same opportunities as boys, then it seemed logical that their behavior—including their criminal conduct—would become more like that of boys. In short, women's liberation ultimately would result in "equality on the wanted list."

These ideas informed Rita Simon's important 1975 contribution, *Women and Crime* (see also Simon, 2002). "If one assumes that the changes in women's roles, in their perceptions of self, and in their desire for expanded horizons that began in the latter part of the sixties will not be abated," observed Simon (1975: 1), "then we would expect that one of the major by-products of the women's movement will be a high proportion of women who pursue careers in crime." Simon contended that females' entry into the job market would prove particularly consequential because it would give them access to opportunities for "financial and white-collar crimes," such as "fraud, embezzlement, larceny, and forgery" (p. 2). She rejected the idea, however, that women's participation in violent crimes would increase. Arguing that women committed violent crimes largely because of the "frustration, the subservience, and the dependency that have characterized the traditional female role," Simon reasoned that occupational advancement would reduce these "feelings of being victimized and exploited" and thus would blunt "their motivation to kill" (p. 2).

This liberation thesis was stated even more boldly and eloquently by Freda Adler in her classic book *Sisters in Crime*, which carried the revealing subtitle *The Rise of the New Female Criminal* (1975 [Chapter 24 in this part]). Adler proclaimed that women not only were committing more crimes but also were engaging in traditionally male offenses. She noted that between 1960 and 1972, female arrests increased 168% for burglary, 277% for robbery, 280% for embezzlement, and over 300% for larceny (Adler, 1975: 16). She linked these dramatic shifts in female criminality to the transformation of gender roles that was then occurring in American society. "Women are no longer indentured to the kitchens, baby carriages, or bedrooms of America," observed Adler. "Allowed their freedom for the first time, women—by the tens of thousands—have chosen to desert those kitchens and plunge exuberantly into the formerly all-male quarter of the working world" (p. 12). But there was also a "shady aspect of liberation": the rise of new female criminals. "In the same way that women are demanding equal opportunity in fields of legitimate endeavor," concluded Adler, "a similar number of determined women are forcing their way into the world of major crimes" (p. 13).

The work by Adler and Simon was critically important in bringing gender into criminological discourse and in prompting sustained research on women's criminality (Hartman and Sundt, 2010). Still, their versions of the liberation thesis have been subjected to much critical scrutiny. Many criminologists, including later feminist scholars, have rejected this thesis (see, e.g., Belknap, 1996; Daly and Chesney-Lind, 1988; Heimer, 2000; Steffensmeier and Allan, 1996). Although several concerns have been voiced, three criticisms of the liberation thesis seem most important to review.

First, the empirical predictions of the thesis have not proven correct (see Heimer, 2000; Schwartz and Steffensmeier, 2015; Steffensmeier and Allan, 1996; Steffensmeier et al., 2005). While the percentage of all arrests involving females has increased a good deal since the 1960s, the largest increases involve the crimes of larceny, fraud, and

forgery—which include the traditionally "female" offenses of shoplifting, passing "bad" checks, and welfare fraud. The increased involvement of females in these offenses began well before the Women's Movement became popular in the late 1960s. And certain data suggest that arrest statistics may exaggerate the increased involvement of females in crime. In particular, some of the increase in female arrests may be attributable to changes in police practices—with the police becoming more likely to arrest females.

Second, the liberation thesis implied (if not stated directly in places) that females' labor market participation and achievement of equality across a range of social opportunities would foster criminality. The data showed, however, that gender equality's "dark side" was not to create offenders. Instead, crime was more common among those who did *not* achieve equality—among women who were trapped in economically marginal positions (Davidson and Chesney-Lind, 2009; Giordano et al., 1981; Heimer, 2000; Wolfe et al., 1984). True equality, therefore, might well reduce, rather than increase, women's criminal involvement.

Third and relatedly, the focus of the liberation thesis on gender socialization and occupational opportunities did not consider the structural roots of the inequality between men and women. To be sure, as liberal feminists, scholars such as Adler and Simon were critical of the barriers that they and other women faced. More radical feminists, however, contended that the analyses of liberation theorists did not get to the core of the problem: that patriarchy—a system of men's dominance of women—underlay how women were socialized, why women experienced discrimination in the workplace, and why women were consigned—often alone and with children—to marginal economic positions. A feminist theory of crime, they claimed, thus must move beyond discussions of liberation to illuminate how power affects the crime and victimization of women.

Patriarchy and Crime

Radical feminism, which places patriarchy at the center of its analysis, has had a widespread influence on criminological scholarship (see Belknap, 1996; Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Davidson and Chesney-Lind, 2009; Groot, 2010; Sharp, 2009; Simpson, 1989). Within criminal justice, for example, it has spawned research on gender inequities in sentencing and on how the law is used to reaffirm traditional, subordinate female roles and to control women's sexuality (e.g., the "double standard" in the juvenile justice system of institutionalizing "promiscuous" girls but not boys; Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 2004; Corsaro et al., 2015; Daly and Tonry, 1997). This perspective also illuminated the importance of investigating the victimization of women by men. Studies showed how male violence against women—such as nonstranger rape and the battering of intimates—was traditionally subject to virtually no sanctions by the state. Such violence was thus conceptualized as a means by which men dominate women and, in doing so, reproduce the existing patriarchal system (Daly and Chesney-Lind, 1988).

In rejecting male-centered criminology, radical feminism also argued that there would be a need to develop gender-specific theories. Because they neglected gender and ignored the role of patriarchy as the underlying social context for behavior, traditional theories were incapable of explicating the gendered experiences that were central to a full understanding of female (and male) criminality. Radical feminism helped spur a number of "qualitative" studies of female crime, wherein researchers observed and conducted intensive interviews with female offenders (e.g., Bottcher, 2001; Daly, 1992; Gilfus, 1992; Giordano et al., 2002; Miller, 2001, 2008; Miller and Mullins, 2006). Such studies shed much light on the social world of these offenders and contributed to the development of gender-specific theories as well as to the revision of traditional theories.

Meda Chesney-Lind (1989 [Chapter 25 in this part]) provides an important example of a "feminist theory" in which considerations of patriarchy illuminate the special causes of female delinquency. She observes, for example, that "girls are frequently the recipients of violence and sexual abuse" (p. 23). Patriarchy is conducive to such abuse because females in general are objectified as "sexual property." "In a society that idealizes inequality in male/female relationships and venerates youth in women, girls are easily defined as sexually attractive by older men" (p. 24). Escape from this abuse, however, is not easy. Girls who run away often are returned to their homes by the state—a practice that ignores the girls' genuine fears of continued victimization and serves to confirm parental, patriarchal authority. The only option thus for many abused girls is to seek refuge in the "streets," where they must commit crimes to survive. But patriarchy shapes their experience and victimization here as well. "It is no accident that [these] girls … get involved in criminal activities that exploit their sexual object status," comments Chesney-Lind (for similar accounts and research, see Daly, 1992; Gilfus, 1992). "American society has defined as desirable youthful, physically perfect women. This means that girls on the streets, who have little else of value to trade, are encouraged to use this 'resource'" (Chesney-Lind, 1989: 24). It is noteworthy that considerations of sexual abuse, its relation to patriarchy, and its etiological role in crime have been virtually absent in the major theories of crime authored by males.

The work of Chesney-Lind illustrates what is perhaps the most prominent theme in feminist theories of crime: the idea that the oppression of women, including their criminal victimization, is a major cause of female offending (Daly, 2010; Davidson and Chesney-Lind, 2009; Groot, 2010; Miller and Mullins, 2006; Sharp, 2009). In particular, some females engage in crime in an effort to cope with or overcome certain of the problems they face—with many of these problems stemming from the gender inequality that characterizes patriarchal society.

Gendering Traditional Theories

Along with the rise of gender-specific theories, there have also been numerous efforts to apply traditional theories to the explanation of female crime and the gender gap in crime. These efforts typically find that many of the variables that explain male crime also explain female crime. Such variables include association with delinquent peers, beliefs favorable to crime, low social and self-control, strains, the perceived costs and benefits of crime, and opportunities for crime. In fact, reviews of the research have found that there is a great deal of overlap between the leading causes of female and male crime (Agnew, 2009; Andrews and Bonta, 1994; De Coster et al., 2013; Hubbard and Pratt, 2002; Lanctot and Le Blanc, 2002; Steffensmeier and Broidy, 2001). (Relatedly, the conditions that predict the success in reducing crime for males are similar to those for females [Dowden and Andrews, 1999].) Further, certain of these causes go a long way toward explaining the gender gap in crime. In particular, studies suggest that most of the gender gap in crime is due to the fact that males are more likely than females to associate with delinquent peers, be low in self-control, be low in social control, and so on (e.g., Agnew, 2009; De Coster et al., 2013; Haynie and Soller, 2015; Jensen, 2003; Moffitt et al., 2001; Rowe et al., 1995; Zahn, 2009). Traditional theories, then, have much to say about the relationship between gender and crime.

At the same time, some criminologists argue that these theories are inadequate for several reasons (see Belknap and Holsinger, 2006; Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 2004; Davidson and Chesney-Lind, 2009; Lanctot and Le Blanc, 2002; Miller and Mullins, 2006, 2009; Sharp, 2009; Steffensmeier and Broidy, 2001). While many of the same factors cause male and female crime, there is some evidence that certain factors have a larger effect on crime among males or females. For example, several studies indicate that association with delinquent peers is more likely to lead to crime among males (see Giordano, 2009; McGloin and Dipietro, 2013; Mears et al., 1998; Piquero et al., 2005; but see Weerman and Hoeve, 2012). Early puberty, however, is more likely to lead to crime among females (Fishbein et

al., 2009). Traditional theories do not explain why this is the case. Also, there is evidence that certain gender-related factors neglected by traditional theories may help explain female and/or male crime. Such factors include the nature of one's gender identity, experiences with gender discrimination, differences in physical size and strength, romantic disputes and partner abuse, the timing of menstruation, and—as indicated above—sexual abuse (e.g., Belknap and Holsinger, 2006; Bottcher, 2001; Eitle, 2002; Haynie, 2003; Steffensmeier and Allan, 1996; Vaske et al., 2015; Zahn, 2009). Finally, while traditional theories may state that males are more likely than females to possess those factors that contribute to crime, they usually do not explain why this is the case. Why, for example, are males more likely to associate with delinquent peers or be low in self-control? Given these inadequacies, many criminologists have embarked upon the task of "gendering" traditional theories; that is, devoting explicit attention to the ways in which gender might impact the causal forces identified by these theories (see Daly and Chesney-Lind, 1988; De Coster et al., 2013; Haynie and Soller, 2015; Lanctot and Le Blanc, 2002; Steffensmeier and Broidy, 2001; Zahn, 2009). In particular, how might gender affect the nature of, exposure to, and reaction to these forces? There have now been attempts to "gender" virtually all of the traditional theories described in earlier sections of this book.

There have been several recent efforts to apply biopsychological theories to the explanation of female (and male) crime and the gender gap in crime (see Fishbein et al., 2009; and Vaske et al., 2015, for overviews). The most prominent is that of Moffitt et al. (2001). They find that most of the gender difference in crime is due to the fact that females are less likely to possess the personality traits of low constraint and negative emotionality (see Chapter 43; see also De Coster et al., 2013; Nofziger, 2010). They argue that while these traits are in part socially produced, they are also heavily influenced by biological factors—including genetic inheritance and exposure to biological harms such as head injuries. Other biological factors have also been used to help explain sex differences in crime—although such factors are typically said to work in combination with social factors. For example, females who experience puberty at an early age are more likely to engage in delinquency, especially acts such as drinking under age, truancy, and disorderly conduct. This is partly because their early physical maturity increases the likelihood they will get involved in romantic relationships, associate with delinquent peers, and experience conflict with their parents (Fishbein et al., 2009; Haynie, 2003).

Broidy and Agnew (1997) have applied "general strain theory" to the explanation of female crime and gender differences in crime (see Agnew's selection in Chapter 14; Agnew, 2009; De Coster et al., 2013; Kaufman, 2009). Based on a detailed review of the existing theoretical and empirical literature, they state that the gender gap in crime cannot be explained by arguing that males experience more strains than females. Males and females experience similar amounts of strains; in fact, some studies indicate that females experience more strains than males. Instead, Broidy and Agnew explain the gender gap in three ways. First, males are more likely to experience strains *conducive to crime*, such as criminal victimization. Second, males are more likely to react to strains with moral outrage, while females more often react with a combination of anger, depression, and guilt—which may be less conducive to other-directed crime. Finally, males are more likely to cope with strains and negative emotions through crime. This is because they are higher in negative emotionality, lower in constraint, lower in social control, lower in social support, more likely to hold beliefs favorable to crime, and more likely to associate with delinquent peers, among other things. Broidy and Agnew explain that these gender differences arise due to discrepancies in such things as social position and power, socialization, and identity. Broidy and Agnew also attempt to explain why some females do engage in crime. Here they argue that many females do experience strains conducive to crime, with many of these strains being linked to gender inequality and oppression. Such strains include sexual abuse, gender discrimination, and partner/dating violence.

Several theorists have applied social learning and differential association theory to the examination of gender and crime (see Agnew, 2009; Giordano, 2009; Heimer, 1996; Jensen, 2003; McGloin and Dipietro, 2013; Mears et al. 1998; Simons et al., 2002). A key assertion of these theories is that association with delinquent peers increases the

likelihood of crime, with peers being the major source for learning crime. Some theorists, however, argue that gender influences the relationship between delinquent peers and crime (for overviews, see Giordano, 2009; Haynie and Soller, 2015; McGloin and Dipietro, 2013). Females are less often exposed to delinquent peers, partly due to their close supervision by parents and others and partly due to the tendency toward "homophily" in friendship ties (which means that females' friends are often other females—a case of "birds of a feather flocking together"). Females are also less likely to respond to such association by engaging in crime, partly because of their stronger moral commitment and the constraining effect of female "typescripts"—rules about how females should think and behave (De Coster et al., 2013; Heimer and De Coster, 1999). However, females are more likely to learn violent definitions and engage in crime when there is a breakdown of emotional bonds with the family, and when there is association with male friends or romantic partners who are delinquent.

Costello and Mederer (2003) apply control theory to the explanation of gender differences in crime (see also Agnew, 2009; De Coster et al., 2013; Hagan et al., 1987, 2002; Heimer, 1996; Lanctot and Le Blanc, 2002; Payne, 2009). Being control theorists, they do not ask why men commit so much crime. Their crime requires no special explanation, since it is "natural" for people to pursue their self-interests in the most expedient manner available—including crime. Rather, they ask, "Why don't women commit as much crime as men?" (Costello and Mederer, 2003: 88). They argue that the answer is that women are more controlled than men. Women are socialized to exercise more self-control and show more concern for others. Women are more closely supervised and are more likely to be sanctioned by others when they display aggressive behavior. And women are more involved in childcare and more closely tied to the household, which limits their opportunities for crime. Costello and Mederer argue that the greater control of women stems from their ability to bear and nurse children. Women's historic role as the primary caregivers of infants tied them to the home and led to the equation of femininity with self-control and concern for others. Costello and Mederer, however, argue that this arrangement has become increasingly dysfunctional for women, and that "men must become more like women and share the constraints of caretaking" (2003: 90). This will allow women to better pursue goals that are not tied to the family and will reduce the crime of men.

Criminologists have revised still other traditional crime theories in an effort to better understand the relationship between gender and crime (Agnew, 2009). Such theories include labeling theory (see Bartusch and Matsueda, 1996; Braithwaite, 1989), deterrence and rational choice theories (Blackwell and Eschholz, 2002; Tibbetts and Herz, 1996), life-course theories (Daly, 2010; Davidson and Chesney-Lind, 2009; Giordano, 2010), and the routine activities perspective (Schwartz and Pitts, 1995). In all such cases, these theories are combined with feminist insights to better understand why females engage in crime or why males have higher rates of crime.

Masculinities and Crime: Doing Gender

In *Masculinities and Crime*, James Messerschmidt (1993 [Chapter 26]) challenges both traditional and feminist criminological theories of criminal conduct. Traditional theories may be male-centered, but they do not examine how "being male" is related to crime. Men might be strained, lack control, and differentially associate with peers, but how their gender is implicated in their behavior has not been analyzed. Feminists have brought gender to the center of criminological analysis, but their vision of men tends to be stereotypical and unidimensional. In particular, when the lens of patriarchy is employed, males are conceptualized as dominant. This approach, however, ignores the considerable variations among men, especially in how they seek to affirm their masculinity.

To Messerschmidt, criminality and masculinity are intertwined. He argues that in social situations, men are constantly confronted with the task of establishing their manliness. When legitimate means of demonstrating

masculinity are denied, crime becomes a resource to accomplish this task. Criminal behavior thus is best seen as a way of "doing gender."

Messerschmidt recognizes that males "do gender" largely within the confines of "hegemonic masculinity"—the prevailing idealized cultural conception that defines "masculinity" as involving the dominance of women, heterosexuality, the pursuit of sexual gratification, independence, and so on (1993: 82). Still, this general masculinity is specified by the intersection of age, class, and race. Different "masculinities"—tied to structural locations—thus emerge and have varying impacts on the rate and content of criminal behavior. For example, middle-class white boys often engage in petty delinquency to show their masculinity, but they also have access to conventional ways to "do gender," such as through success in school and, later, in the labor market. In contrast, lower-class minority boys, who face structural barriers and dismal futures, are more likely to seek to demonstrate their masculinity through repeated robberies and acts of violence. As Messerschmidt notes, the pursuit of these different masculinities both reflects and serves to reproduce the existing class, racial, and gender inequalities in society.

Messerschmidt (1999, 2004) has also suggested that the role of the "body" be considered in the complex interplay between masculinity and crime. In fact, he argues for a "body friendly criminology" (1999: 200; see also Daly, 2010: 239–240). He notes that "our bodies constrain or facilitate social action and, therefore, mediate and influence social practices." For adolescent males, for example, physical size and strength are sources of opportunity, and they structure the nature of both conformity and crime. Being large and strong allows youths to accomplish or show their masculinity by playing sports (such as football) and through heterosexual activities. It might also enable a youth, however, to gain a reputation for being an effective fighter and provide access to a gang. Alternatively, boys small in size and stature may be defined as "wimps" and be precluded from showing masculinity through sports, dating, or gang conflict. They may be pushed into a painful "subordinate masculinity," and their deviance may take a different form, such as preying on even more vulnerable youths (e.g., victimizing younger female relatives in private spaces). In any event, by introducing the concept of "the body," Messerschmidt continues his attempt to specify the conditions under which males "do gender" through crime.

Messerschmidt's focus on masculinities and on "crime as doing gender" is an important contribution that is prompting scholarly investigations (see, e.g., Gadd, 2000; Hood-Williams, 2001; Jefferson and Carlen, 1996; Miller and Mullins, 2006; Mullins, 2006, 2010; see also Messerschmidt and Tomsen, 2015, for a review). Field studies have provided some support for his argument that crime is sometimes used as a device for "accomplishing masculinity," and certain survey studies suggest that threats to one's masculine status increase the likelihood of crime (e.g., Jakupcak, 2003). His theory, however, risks *overpredicting* crime among men. By linking masculinity so closely to crime, the theory is confronted with explaining the thorny reality that most men do not commit crime most of the time (Hood-Williams, 2001). In addition, there is some controversy over how Messerschmidt's perspective might explain female crime (e.g., Heimer, 1994).

Messerschmidt (2002, 2004) argues that in certain social environments and situations, females may construct and embrace a "bad girl" femininity that involves crime. This is said to be true of many female gang members. To quote Messerschmidt (2002: 464, 470):

> What is usually considered atypical behavior by girls outside the social situation of the gang is, in fact, normalized within the social context of inter-neighborhood conflict; gang-girl violence in this situation is encouraged, permitted, and privileged by both boys and girls.... Even though gang girls situationally engage in similar behavior as gang boys (physically violent practices), this does not ... challenge their feminine identity.... In short, for many adolescent girls and young women, "acting bad" and femininity are *not* incompatible. (our emphasis)

Jody Miller (2002), however, argues that most gang girls embrace a masculine identity, as reflected in the title of her book about female gangs, *One of the Guys* (2001). She explains this by stating that "it makes sense that young

women would strive to adopt a gang identity as 'one of the guys,' particularly given the status and respect available within gangs to youths who exhibit characteristics typically associated with the highly valued cultural construction of gang masculinities" (Miller, 2002: 445; see also Daly, 2010). In any event, both Messerschmidt and Miller argue that males *and females* sometimes use crime as a device for "accomplishing gender"—that is, for constructing and demonstrating their particular conceptions of masculinity (and perhaps femininity) in certain situations.

Other work by Miller also converges with that of Messerschmidt, not on female offending, but on the issue of *women's victimization* as an outgrowth of certain masculinities. In her book *Getting Played* (2008 and Chapter 27 in this section), Miller puts forth a theory of inner-city crime that suggests that neighborhood structural disadvantage leads to ecologically structured norms supportive of violence, particularly among community men (see also Sampson and Wilson, 1995; Chapter 28, Part IX). Specifically, akin to Anderson's "code of the street" (Chapter 10, Part III), the norms of the disadvantaged inner city prescribe toughness, violence, and sexual prowess as keys to masculinity and respect. Importantly, Miller emphasizes that these ideas about masculinity and respect align with the mistreatment of women. In short, the victimization of women establishes credibility. As such, young women in disadvantaged communities often witness public displays of physical, domestic violence against other women and are themselves the objects of sexual harassment and sexual assault (see also Miller and Brunson, 2000; Cobbina et al., 2008; see Wilcox et al., 2015, for a review).

Additional scholarship, some of which was alluded to above, has also suggested that norms about masculinity shape violence against women (Daly and Chesney-Lind, 1988). Beyond Miller's work, a particularly noteworthy contemporary example of such scholarship is the work of Walter DeKeseredy and Martin Schwartz. Over the course of the past 30 years, they have articulated and tested a "male peer support theory" that points to male subcultures that rationalize the objectification of women and thus perpetuate their sexual and physical victimization (for a review, see DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2015). At least seven variants of male peer support theory have been offered by DeKeseredy and Schwartz, but the core of all of them is the idea that, fueled by social patriarchy, attachments among male peers legitimate, and even encourage, the victimization of women. Unlike Miller's focus on violence-supportive norms that emerge in disadvantaged neighborhood contexts (and she focused on a disadvantaged, predominantly African American community, more specifically), DeKeseredy and Schwartz (2015: 303) suggest that "male peer pressure that perpetuates and rationalizes the sexual objectification of women and the sexual or physical abuse of them is found within a wide variety of communities of all ethnicities." These settings might range from gangs from impoverished city neighborhoods to fraternities in affluent private universities. According to DeKeseredy and Schwartz (2013: 49–50), studies of males in diverse contexts reveal that

> boys and men tell exaggerated stories of their success sexually with females, their success in dominating females, and their ability to control other people to get what they want. The advice that they are likely to give to a young man in conflict over what he sees as a challenge to his patriarchal rights in many groups will encourage and legitimate the physical, psychological, and sexual abuse of women. They might tell the young man to slap or hit a female who talks back to him. They might insist that if she refuses sex that he should force the issue, to maintain his rights. In other words, the social support that friends offer to their members in psychological stress can be to abuse her physically or sexually.

Complementing work that highlights the influence of masculinity, patriarchy, and "doing gender" is the recent emergence of a "queer criminology." Work in this new tradition challenges the longstanding heteronormative approach to understanding the role of gender in crime and the historical disregard of LGBTQ+ communities in criminological research (Panfil, 2018; Woods, 2014). Some queer criminology research focuses on the victimization of sexual minorities (Perry and Dyck, 2014) or their (mis)treatment within the criminal justice system (Mogul et al., 2011). Other work explores offending among sexual minorities. For example, recent research invokes theories of identity construction (Maruna, 2001; see Chapter 20) to understand the process of gay gang members either desisting or persisting in gang involvement and crime (Panfil, 2017, 2020). Other recent work examines the role of

general strain theory (see Chapter 14) in school-based weapon carrying among LGBQ versus heterosexual youths, concluding that traditional criminological theories likely need to be modified to fit the unique experiences of LGBTQ+ identities (Button and Worthen, 2017).

An Integrated Theory of Gender and Crime

In sum, a variety of theories have been used to explain female (and male) crime, the gender gap in crime, female victimization. These include feminist theories, the traditional theories of crime described in previous sections of this book, and revised versions of these traditional theories. One might wonder whether it is possible to integrate certain of the theories to develop a more general theory of gender and crime. Steffensmeier and Allan (1996, 2000; see also Schwartz, 2010) have attempted such an integration.

They begin by noting that traditional theories of crime help us understand female offending and the gender gap in crime, but these theories have their shortcomings. Among other things, they do not explain why the gender gap is largest for serious crimes, and they shed little light on gender differences in the "context" of offending (e.g., the fact that female offending more often involves relational concerns). Steffensmeier and Allan then develop an integrated theory that draws on both traditional theories and feminist perspectives. In particular, their theory considers many of the causal factors identified in traditional theories of crime—such as level of self-control, association with criminal others, the perceived costs and benefits of crime, and routine activities. At the same time, their theory describes the many ways in which gender influences the individual's standing on these factors and sometimes the effect of these factors on crime. Further, their focus on gender leads them to identify additional factors that impact crime, such as the opportunities women have to "exploit sex as an illegal money-making service" and "the consequences of motherhood and childcare" (Steffensmeier and Allan, 1996: 474).

Their theory is designed to explain female and male offending, the gender gap in offending, and gender differences in the context of offending. While their theory may not explicitly incorporate all of the factors said to affect female offending and the gender gap, their theory is the most ambitious attempt to date to fully account for the relationship between gender and crime.

Additional attempts at integration are under way, with certain of these taking on one of the great challenges of crime theories—describing the ways in which gender intersects with race/ethnicity and class. In fact, the notion of "intersectional criminology" is a growing area of scholarship, with the recognition that interconnected identities and statuses must be considered in order to fully explain crime and social control (e.g., Bernard, 2013; Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 2004; Daly, 2010; Potter, 2013; Simpson and Elis, 1995; Simpson and Gibbs, 2006; Zahn, 2009). Jody Miller's work discussed above—detailing the experiences of disadvantaged, African American girls and young women—provides an example of an intersectional approach to understanding crime and victimization (see Chapter 27 in this part).

References

Adler, Freda. 1975. *Sisters in Crime: The Rise of the New Female Criminal*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Agnew, Robert. 2009. "The Contribution of 'Mainstream' Theories to the Explanation of Female Delinquency." In Margaret A. Zahn (ed.), *The Delinquent Girl*, pp. 7–29. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Andrews, D. A. and James Bonta. 1994. *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*. Cincinnati: Anderson.

Bartusch, D. J. and Ross L. Matsueda. 1996. "Gender, Reflected Appraisals, and Labeling: A Cross-Group Test of an Interactionist Theory of Delinquency." *Social Forces* **75**: 145–177.

Belknap, Joanne. 1996. *The Invisible Woman: Gender, Crime, and Justice*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Belknap, Joanne and Kristi Holsinger. 2006. "The Gendered Nature of Risk Factors for Delinquency." *Feminist Criminology* **1**: 48–71.

Bernard, April. 2013. "The Intersectional Alternative: Explaining Female Criminality." *Feminist Criminology* **8**: 3–19.

Blackwell, Brenda Sims and Sarah Eschholz. 2002. "Sex Differences and Rational Choice: Traditional Tests and New Directions." In Alex R. Piquero and Stephen G. Tibbetts (eds.), *Rational Choice and Criminal Behavior*, pp. 109–135. New York: Routledge.

Bottcher, Jean. 2001. "Social Practices of Gender: How Gender Relates to Delinquency in the Everyday Lives of High-Risk Youths." *Criminology* **39**: 9–32.

Braithwaite, John. 1989. *Crime, Shame, and Reintegration*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Broidy, Lisa and Robert Agnew. 1997. "Gender and Crime: A General Strain Theory Perspective." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **34**: 275–306.

Burgess-Proctor, Amanda. 2006. "Intersections of Race, Class, Gender, and Crime." *Feminist Criminology* **1**: 27–47.

Button, Deeanna M. and Meredith G. F. Worthen. 2017. "Applying a General Strain Theory Framework to Understand School Weapon Carrying Among LGBQ and Heterosexual Youth." *Criminology* **55**: 806–832.

Chesney-Lind, Meda. 1989. "Girls' Crime and Woman's Place: Toward a Feminist Model of Female Delinquency." *Crime and Delinquency* **35**: 5–29.

____. 2006. "Patriarchy, Crime, and Justice." *Feminist Criminology* **1**: 6–26.

Chesney-Lind, Meda and Randall G. Shelden. 2004. *Girls, Delinquency, and Juvenile Justice*, 3rd edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Cobbina, Jennifer E., Jody Miller, and Rod K. Brunson. 2008. "Gender, Neighborhood Danger, and Risk-Avoidance Strategies Among Urban African-American Youths." *Criminology* **46**: 673–709.

Corsaro, Nicholas, Jesenia M. Pizarro, and Sandra Lee Browning. 2015. "Gender and Criminal Justice Processing." In Francis T. Cullen, Pamela Wilcox, Jennifer L. Lux, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (eds.), *Sisters in Crime Revisited: Bringing Gender into Criminology*, pp. 325–350. New York: Oxford University Press.

Costello, Barbara J. and Helen J. Mederer. 2003. "A Control Theory of Gender Differences in Crime and Delinquency." In Chester L. Britt and Michael R. Gottfredson (eds.), *Control Theories of Crime and Delinquency*, pp. 77–108. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

De Coster, Stacy, Karen Heimer, and Samantha R. Cumley. 2013. “Gender and Theories of Delinquency.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 313–330. New York: Oxford University Press.

Daly, Kathleen. 1997. “Different Ways of Conceptualizing Sex/Gender in Feminist Theory and Their Implications for Criminology.” *Theoretical Criminology* **1**: 25–51.

____. 2010. “Feminist Perspectives in Criminology: A Review with Gen Y in Mind.” In Eugene McLaughlin and Tim Newburn (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 225–246. London: Sage.

____. 1992. “Women’s Paths to Felony Court: Feminist Theories of Lawbreaking and Problems of Representation.” *Southern California Review of Law and Women’s Studies* **2**: 11–52.

Daly, Kathleen and Meda Chesney-Lind. 1988. “Feminism and Criminology.” *Justice Quarterly* **5**: 497–535.

Daly, Kathleen and Michael Tonry. 1997. “Gender, Race, and Sentencing.” In Michael Tonry (ed.), *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, Volume **22**, pp. 201–252. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Davidson, Janet T. and Meda Chesney-Lind. 2009. “Gender and Crime.” In J. Mitchell Miller (ed.), *21st Century Criminology: A Reference Handbook*, pp. 76–84. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

DeKeseredy, Walter S. and Martin D. Schwartz. 2013. *Male Peer Support and Violence Against Women*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

____. 2015. “Male Peer Support Theory.” In Francis T. Cullen, Pamela Wilcox, Jennifer L. Lux, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (eds.), *Sisters in Crime Revisited: Bringing Gender into Criminology,* pp. 302–322. New York: Oxford University Press.

Dowden, Craig and D. A. Andrews. 1999. “What Works for Female Offenders: A Meta-Analytic Review.” *Crime and Delinquency* **45**: 438–452.

Eitle, David J. 2002. “Exploring a Source of Deviance-Producing Strain for Females: Perceived Discrimination and General Strain Theory.” *Journal of Criminal Justice* **30**: 429–442.

Fishbein, Diana, Shari Miller, Donna Marie Winn, and Gayle Dakof. 2009. “Biopsychological Factors, Gender, and Delinquency.” In Margaret A. Zahn (ed.), *The Delinquent Girl*, pp. 84–106. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Gadd, David. 2000. “Masculinities, Violence, and Defended Psychosocial Subjects.” *Theoretical Criminology* **4**: 429–449.

Gilfus, Mary. 1992. “From Victims to Survivors to Offenders: Women’s Routes of Entry and Immersion Into Street Life.” *Women and Criminal Justice* **4**: 63–89.

Giordano, Peggy. 2010. *Legacies of Crime*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

____. 2009. “Peer Influences on Girls’ Delinquency.” In Margaret A. Zahn (ed.), *The Delinquent Girl*, pp. 127–145. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Giordano, Peggy C., Stephen A. Cernkovich, and Jennifer L. Rudolph. 2002. “Gender, Crime, and Desistance: Toward a Theory of Cognitive Transformation.” *American Journal of Sociology* **107**: 990–1064.

Giordano, Peggy C., Sandra Kerbel, and Sandra Dudley. 1981. “The Economics of Female Criminality: An Analysis of Police Blotters, 1890–1976.” In Lee H. Bowker (ed.), *Women and Crime in America*, pp. 65–82. New York: Macmillan.

Groot, Brittany L. 2010. “Chesney-Lind, Meda: Feminist Model of Female Delinquency.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*, pp. 152–156. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hagan, John, Bill McCarthy, and H. Foster. 2002. “A Gendered Theory of Delinquency and Despair in the Life Course.” *Acta Sociologica* **45**: 37–46.

Hagan, John, John H. Simpson, and A. R. Gillis. 1987. “Class in the Household: A Power-Control Theory of Gender and Delinquency.” *American Journal of Sociology* **96**: 265–299.

Hartman, Jennifer L. and Jody L. Sundt. 2010. “Adler, Freda: Sisters in Crime.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*, pp. 3–6. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Haynie, Dana L. 2003. “Contexts of Risk: Explaining the Link Between Girls’ Pubertal Development and Their Delinquency Involvement.” *Social Forces* **82**: 355–397.

Haynie, Dana L. and Brian Soller. 2015. “A Social Network Perspective of Gender and Crime.” In Francis T. Cullen, Pamela Wilcox, Jennifer L. Lux, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (eds.), *Sisters in Crime Revisited: Bringing Gender into Criminology*, pp. 149–172. New York: Oxford University Press.

Heimer, Karen. 2000. “Changes in the Gender Gap in Crime and Women’s Economic Marginalization.” In Gary LaFree (ed.), *The Nature of Crime, Continuity and Change, Criminal Justice 2000*, Volume **1**, pp. 427–485. Washington, DC: Office of the Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

____. 1996. “Gender, Interaction, and Delinquency: Testing a Theory of Differential Social Control.” *Social Psychology Quarterly* **59**: 39–61.

____. 1994. “Review of *Masculinities and Crime*.” *Contemporary Sociology* **23**: 860–861.

Heimer, Karen and Stacey De Coster. 1999. “The Gendering of Violent Delinquency.” *Criminology* **37**: 277–318.

Hood-Williams, John. 2001. “Gender, Masculinities, and Crime: From Structures to Psyches.” *Theoretical Criminology* **5**: 37–60.

Hubbard, Dana Jones and Travis C. Pratt. 2002. “A Meta-Analysis of the Predictors of Delinquency Among Girls.” *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation* **34**: 1–13.

Jakupcak, Matthew. 2003. “Masculine Gender Role Stress and Men’s Fear of Emotions as Predictors of Self-Reported Aggression and Violence.” *Violence and Victims* **18**: 533–541.

Jefferson, Tony and Pat Carlen, eds. 1996. “Masculinities, Social Relations and Crime.” *British Journal of Criminology, special edition*, **36**: 337–444.

Jensen, Gary F. 2003. “Gender Variation in Delinquency: Self-Images, Beliefs, and Peers as Mediating Mechanisms.” In Ronald L. Akers and Gary F. Jensen (eds.), *Social Learning Theory and the Explanation of Crime: A Guide for the New Century—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **11**, pp. 151–178. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Jensen, Gary F. and Raymond Eve. 1976. “Sex Differences in Delinquency.” *Criminology* **13**: 427–448.

Kaufman, Joanne M. 2009. “Gendered Responses to Serious Strain: The Argument for a General Strain Theory of Deviance.” *Justice Quarterly* **26**: 410–444.

Klein, Dorie. 1973. “The Etiology of Female Crime: A Review of the Literature.” *Issues in Criminology* **8**: 3–30.

Lanctot, Nadine and Marc Le Blanc. 2002. “Explaining Deviance by Adolescent Females.” *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research* **29**: 113–202.

Lauritsen, Janet L., Karen Heimer, and James P. Lynch. 2009. “Trends in the Gender Gap in Violent Offending.” *Criminology* **47**: 361–400.

Leonard, Eileen B. 1982. *Women, Crime, and Society: A Critique of Criminology Theory*. New York: Longman.

Maruna, Shadd. 2001. *Making Good: How Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

McGloin, Jean Marie and Stephanie Dipietro. 2013. "Girls, Friends, and Delinquency." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 294–312. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mears, Daniel P., M. Ploeger, and Mark Warr. 1998. "Explaining the Gender Gap in Delinquency: Peer Influence and Moral Evaluations of Behavior." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **35**: 251–266.

Messerschmidt, James W. 2004. *Flesh and Blood*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

____. 1999. "Making Bodies Matter: Adolescent Masculinities, the Body, and Varieties of Violence." *Theoretical Criminology* **3**: 197–220.

____. 1993. *Masculinities and Crime: Critique and Reconceptualization of Theory*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

____. 2002. "On Gang Girls, Gender and a Structured Action Theory." *Theoretical Criminology* **6**: 461–476.

Messerschmidt, James W. and Stephen Tomsen. 2015. "Masculinities and Crime." In Francis T. Cullen, Pamela Wilcox, Jennifer L. Lux, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (eds.), *Sisters in Crime Revisited: Bringing Gender into Criminology*, pp. 281–301. New York: Oxford University Press.

Miller, Jody. 2008. *Getting Played: African American Girls' Urban Inequality and Gendered Violence*. New York: New York University Press.

____. 2001. *One of the Guys: Girls, Gangs, and Gender*. New York: Oxford University Press.

____. 2002. "The Strengths and Limits of 'Doing Gender' for Understanding Street Crime." *Theoretical Criminology* **6**: 433–460.

Miller, Jody and Rod K. Brunson. 2000. "Gender Dynamics in Youth Gangs: A Comparison of Males' and Females' Accounts." *Justice Quarterly* **17**: 419–448.

Miller, Jody and Christopher W. Mullins. 2009. "Feminist Theories of Girls' Delinquency." In Margaret A. Zahn (ed.), *The Delinquent Girl*, pp. 30–49. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

____. 2006. "Taking Stock: The Status of Feminist Theories in Criminology." In Francis T. Cullen, John Paul Wright, and Kristie R. Blevins (eds.), *Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **15**, pp. 217–249. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Moffitt, Terrie E., Avshalom Caspi, Michael Rutter, and Phil A. Silva. 2001. *Sex Differences in Antisocial Behavior*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Mogul, Joey L., Andrea J. Ritchie, and Kay Whitlock. 2011. *Queer (In) justice: The Criminalization of LGBT People in the United States*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Mullins, Christopher W. 2006. *Holding Your Square: Masculinities, Streetlife and Violence*. Portland, OR: Willan.

____. 2010. "Messerschmidt, James W.: Masculinities and Crime." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*, pp. 619–622. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Nofziger, Stacey. 2010. "A Gendered Perspective on the Relationship Between Self-Control and Deviance." *Feminist Criminology* **5**: 29–50.

Ollenburger, Jane C. and Helen A. Moore. 1998. *A Sociology of Women: The Intersection of Patriarchy, Capitalism, and Colonization*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Panfil, Vanessa R. 2020. "'I Was a Homo Thug, Now I'm Just a Homo': Gay Gang Members' Desistance and Persistence." *Criminology* **58**: 255–279.

____. 2017. *The Gang's All Queer: The Lives of Gay Gang Members*. New York: NYU Press.

____. 2018. "Young and Unafraid: Queer Criminology's Unbounded Potential." *Palgrave Communications* **4**: 1–5.

Payne, Allison Anne. 2009. "Girls, Boys, and Schools." *Criminology* **47**: 1167–1199.

Perry, Barbara and D. Ryan Dyck. 2014. "'I Don't Know Where It Is Safe': Trans Women's Experiences of Violence." *Critical Criminology* **22**: 49–63.

Piquero, N. L., A. R. Gover, J. M. MacDonald, and Alex R. Piquero. 2005. "The Influence of Delinquent Peers on Delinquency: Does Gender Matter?" *Youth and Society* **36**: 251–275.

Potter, Hillary. 2013. "Intersectional Criminology: Interrogating Identity and Power in Criminological Research and Theory." *Critical Criminology* **21**: 305–318.

Rennison, Callie Marie. 2009. "A New Look at the Gender Gap in Offending." *Women and Criminal Justice* **19**: 171–190.

Rowe, David C., Alexander T. Vazsonyi, and Daniel J. Flannery. 1995. "Sex Differences in Crime: Do Means and Within-Sex Variation Have Similar Causes?" *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **32**: 84–100.

Sampson, Robert J. and William Julius Wilson. 1995. "Toward a Theory of Race, Crime and Urban Inequality." In John Hagan and Ruth D. Peterson (eds.), *Crime and Inequality*, pp. 37–54. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Schwartz, Jennifer. 2010. "Steffensmeier, Darrell J. and Emile Andersen Allan: A Gendered Theory of Offending." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*, pp. 885–889. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Schwartz, Jennifer and Darrell Steffensmeier. 2015. "Can the Gender Gap in Offending Be Explained?" In Francis T. Cullen, Pamela Wilcox, Jennifer L. Lux, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (eds.), *Sisters in Crime Revisited: Bringing Gender into Criminology*, pp. 229–259. New York: Oxford University Press.

Schwartz, Jennifer, Darrell Steffensmeier, Hua Zhong, and Jeff Ackerman. 2009. "Trends in the Gender Gap in Violence." *Criminology* **47**: 401–425.

Schwartz, Martin D. and Victoria L. Pitts. 1995. "Exploring a Feminist Routine Activities Approach to Explaining Sexual Assault." *Justice Quarterly* **12**: 9–31.

Sharp, Susan. 2009. "Feminist Criminology." In J. Mitchell Miller (ed.), *21st Century Criminology: A Reference Handbook*, pp. 245–252. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Simon, Rita James. 2002. "Looking Back on 40-Plus Years as a Professional Career." In Gilbert Geis and Mary Dodge (eds.), *Lessons of Criminology*, pp. 199–218. Cincinnati: Anderson.

____. 1975. *Women and Crime*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

Simons, Ronald L., Eric Stewart, Leslie C. Gordon, Rand D. Conger, and Glen H. Elder, Jr. 2002. "A Test of Life-Course Explanations for Stability and Change in Antisocial Behavior from Adolescence to Young Adulthood." *Criminology* **40**: 401–434.

Simpson, Sally S. 1989. "Feminist Theory, Crime, and Justice." *Criminology* **27**: 605–631.

Simpson, Sally S. and Lori Elis. 1995. "Doing Gender: Sorting Out the Caste and Crime Conundrum." *Criminology* **33**: 47–81.

Simpson, Sally S. and Carole Gibbs. 2006. “Making Sense of Intersections.” In Karen Heimer and Candance Kruttschnitt (eds.), *Gender and Crime: Patterns in Victimization and Offending*, pp. 269–302. New York: New York University Press.

Smart, Carol. 1977. *Women, Crime and Criminology: A Feminist Critique*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Smith, Douglas A. and Raymond Paternoster. 1987. “The Gender Gap in Theories of Deviance: Issues and Evidence.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **24**: 140–172.

Steffensmeier, Darrell and Emile Allan. 1996. “Gender and Crime: Toward a Gendered Theory of Female Offending.” *Annual Review of Sociology* **22**: 459–487.

____. 2000. “Looking for Patterns: Gender, Age, and Crime.” In Joseph F. Sheley (ed.), *Criminology: A Contemporary Handbook*, 2nd edition, pp. 84–127. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Steffensmeier, Darrell and Lisa Broidy. 2001. “Explaining Female Criminality: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives.” In Claire Renzetti and Lynne Goodstein (eds.), *Women, Crime, and Criminal Justice: Contemporary Issues*, pp. 111–134. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

Steffensmeier, Darrell and Robert E. Clark. 1980. “Sociocultural vs. Biological/Sexist Explanations of Sex Differences in Crime: A Survey of American Criminology Textbooks, 1918–1965.” *American Sociologist* **15**: 246–255.

Steffensmeier, Darrell, Jennifer Schwartz, Hua Zhong, and Jeff Ackerman. 2005. “An Assessment of Recent Trends in Girls’ Violence Using Diverse Longitudinal Sources: Is the Gender Gap Closing?” *Criminology* **43**: 355–406.

Tibbetts, Stephen G. and Denise C. Herz. 1996. “Gender Differences in Factors of Social Control and Rational Choice.” *Deviant Behavior* **17**: 183–208.

Vaske, Jamie C., Danielle L. Boisvert, and John Paul Wright. 2015. “A Biosocial Perspective on Female Offending.” In Francis T. Cullen, Pamela Wilcox, Jennifer L. Lux, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (eds.), *Sisters in Crime Revisited: Bringing Gender into Criminology*, pp. 43–66. New York: Oxford University Press.

Weerman, Frank M. and Machteld Hoeve. 2012. “Peers and Delinquency Among Girls and Boys: Are Sex Differences in Delinquency Explained by Peer Factors?” *European Journal of Criminology* **9**: 228–244.

Wilcox, Pamela, Bonnie S. Fisher, and Nicole V. Lasky. 2015. “Gendered Opportunity and Victimization.” In Francis T. Cullen, Pamela Wilcox, Jennifer L. Lux, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (eds.), *Sisters in Crime Revisited: Bringing Gender into Criminology*, pp. 189–208. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wolfe, Nancy T., Francis T. Cullen, and John B. Cullen. 1984. “Describing the Female Offender: A Note on the Demographics of Arrests.” *Journal of Criminal Justice* **12**: 483–492.

Woods, Jordan Blair. 2014. “Queer Contestations and the Future of a Critical ‘Queer’ Criminology.” *Critical Criminology* **22**: 5–19.

Zahn, Margaret A., ed. 2009. *The Delinquent Girl*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

24.
Sisters in Crime*

Freda Adler

In 1938, Clifford Shaw of the Chicago school of criminology published Brothers in Crime, a work whose title revealed his central focus on male crime. Nearly four decades later, Freda Adler (1975) signified a break with this perspective by naming her book Sisters in Crime. *Indeed, her scholarship helped to ensure that no future generation of criminologists would ignore gender in the study of criminal behavior.*

Adler's most provocative claim was that the movement to achieve equality between the sexes would result in increasing female crime, especially in domains previously dominated by men. This liberation thesis underestimated the tenacity of existing gender roles and inequality. Gender differences in socialization and opportunities were not swept away; and, in many ways, boys and girls continued to be raised in different social worlds. Accordingly, the "new female criminals" that Adler saw gathering on the horizon did not, at least in large numbers, materialize (see, however, Alarid et al., 1996).

Adler's work, however, played a major role in directing the attention of criminologists to the gender gap in crime and changes in this gap over time. Also, Adler challenged previous attempts to pathologize female offenders. Instead, she illuminated the way in which social experiences shape the life choices, including the choice of crime, that women make. She developed the case that the major barriers to females' participation in crime are not biological but social. While later criminologists, especially radical feminists, may find the specifics of Adler's liberation thesis problematic, she still deserves much credit for ushering in a feminist paradigm that shifted attention away from the supposed abnormalities of individual female offenders and toward an appreciation of the social circumstances in which women are enmeshed (Cullen et al., 2015).

Further, it may be premature to dismiss the possibility that long-term changes in gender roles will influence the criminal participation of women. A strong liberation thesis may be untenable, but it is not farfetched to theorize that the incremental transformation of gender roles—a transformation that affects the social experiences of women across class and racial boundaries—might be implicated in the amount and content of women's criminality. Indeed, several recent accounts relate female crime to the adoption of nontraditional gender roles and identities—although none of these accounts portray female criminals as "liberated." Rather, they argue that some females assume roles and adopt identities that allow for crime in certain situations (e.g., Messerschmidt, 2002; Miller, 2001). In terms of social change, Adler's Sisters in Crime *is still a "young" book. It will be interesting to revisit her* ideas *a half century from now to see if she has proven more prophetic than we now imagine.*

References

Adler, Freda. 1975. *Sisters in Crime: The Rise of the New Female Criminal*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Alarid, Leanne Fiftal, James W. Marquart, Velmer S. Burton, Jr., Francis T. Cullen, and Steven J. Cuvelier. 1996. "Female Crime Roles in Serious Offenses: A Study of Adult Felons." *Justice Quarterly* **13**: 431–454.

Cullen, Francis T., Pamela Wilcox, Jennifer L. Lux, and Cheryl Lero Jonson, eds. 2015. *Sisters in Crime Revisited: Bringing Gender into Criminology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Messerschmidt, James W. 2002. "On Gang Girls, Gender and a Structured Action Theory." *Theoretical Criminology* **6**: 461–476.

Miller, Jody. 2001. *One of the Guys: Girls, Gangs, and Gender*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Shaw, Clifford R., with the assistance of Henry D. McKay and James F. McDonald. 1938. *Brothers in Crime*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Women are no longer indentured to the kitchens, baby carriages, or bedrooms of America. The skein of myths about women is unraveling, the chains have been pried loose, and there will be no turning back to the days when women found it necessary to justify their existence by producing babies or cleaning houses. Allowed their freedom for the first time, women—by the tens of thousands—have chosen to desert those kitchens, and plunge exuberantly into the formerly all-male quarters of the working world….

In the same way that women are demanding equal opportunity in fields of legitimate endeavor, a similar number of determined women are forcing their way into the world of major crimes….

It is this segment of women who are pushing into—and succeeding at—crimes which were formerly committed by males only. Females like Marge are now being found not only robbing banks single-handedly, but also committing assorted armed robberies, muggings, loan-sharking operations, extortion, murders, and a wide variety of other aggressive, violence-oriented crimes which previously involved only men….

By every indicator available, female criminals appear to be surpassing males in the rate of increase for almost every major crime. Although males continue to commit the greater absolute number of offenses, it is the women who are committing those same crimes at yearly rates of increase now running as high as six and seven times greater than those for males….

In summary, what we have described is a gradual but accelerating social revolution in which women are closing many of the gaps, social and criminal, that have separated them from men. The closer they get, the more alike they look and act. This is not to suggest that there are no inherent differences. Differences do exist and will be elaborated later in this book, but it seems clear that those differences are not of prime importance in understanding female criminality. The simplest and most accurate way to grasp the essence of women's changing patterns is to discard dated notions of femininity. That is a role that fewer and fewer women are willing to play. In the final analysis, women criminals are human beings who have basic needs and abilities and opportunities. Over the years these needs have not changed, nor will they. But women's abilities and opportunities have multiplied, resulting in a kaleidoscope of changing patterns whose final configuration will be fateful for all of us….

---

* Excerpted with permission from Freda Adler, *Sisters in Crime*. Copyright © 1975 by Freda Adler.

Social Differences

Whatever equality may have existed between Adam and Eve before the Fall, there was a clear distinction in their social roles afterward. Adam was thenceforth required to till the soil and earn his bread by the sweat of his brow; Eve was condemned to painful childbirth and total submission to her husband. In one august decree, her reproductive role and social role were established and fixed. To be a woman, then as now, meant not just to be a distinctive blend of physiological and psychological characteristics. It meant and means that one is perceived differently, treated differently, responded to differently, and the subject of different expectations. Given the varying social forces that weigh unequally on the sexes in creatures as culture-dependent as humans, it seems clear that the resulting differences in behavior owe more to wide disparities in social-role than to the narrow differences in physical and psychological makeup.

The answer to the nursery-rhyme question, "what are little girls made of?" is revealing at several different levels. The list of ingredients—"sugar and spice and everything nice"—contains both a biological theory and a social demand. We are told, first of all, that little girls are good because of their inherent structure, and secondly, that they had better be good if they hope to enjoy the status of femininity and avoid the social disapproval which accompanies deviancy. Little boys, too, are under social pressure, but of a different kind. They are made of "snakes and snails and puppy-dog tails"—a combination designed to contrast mischievously and dynamically with the inert and saccharine constitution of their female counterparts. They, too, are saddled with social and presumed biological imperatives which compress the wide-ranging human potential for variation into the narrow confines of social-role expectation. There is hardly any important individual or social area—play, personal hygiene, manners, discipline, dependency, dress, activity, career, sexual activity, aggressiveness, etc.—which has not been polarized and institutionalized as a sex-role difference. While it is true that men have tended to stigmatize women as a group, deviation from social standards is even worse—e.g., the "effeminate" man and the "masculine" woman.

Traditionally, the little girl and later the woman are confined to a low level of noise, dirt, disorder, and physical aggression. They must be obedient, dependent, modest about their bodies, and avoid sex play as well as rough and tumble competition. But life is not all no-no's: for her pains she is allowed to turn more readily to others for gratification, to cry when hurt, to be spontaneously affectionate, and to achieve less in school and work. Whatever the natural inclination of the sexes may be, society does not depend on spontaneous acquisition of the profile it considers desirable: besides identification with the parent of the same sex, which is probably the single most important determinant of behavior, it selects out from the random range of childhood activities those certain ones which will be accentuated or discarded. The shaping process includes toys—mechanical and problem-solving for boys, and soft and nonchallenging for girls—social structuring, individual rewards and punishments, and the satisfactions apparently inherent in conforming to role expectations. The development of aggressive and dependent traits, both of which are considered to be sex-related, is a case in point. One research study found that while aggressive boys become aggressive men and dependent girls become dependent women, the reverse was true for dependent boys and aggressive girls: as they approach maturity, they reverse themselves and also become aggressive men and dependent women, respectively. Similarly, there is a greater overlap of sex-role personality traits when the sibling in a two-child family is of the opposite sex, and this effect is greater with the younger siblings than with the older ones. Clearly, learning and social pressure are influential in effecting sex-role expectations. Extending the argument that social roles are related to biological processes only indirectly, presumably a technology which permitted father to nurture the child could result in a complete social-role reversal. In a pithy and accurate

observation, Simone de Beauvoir summed up the consensus of current thinking when she said, “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.”

In the interests of clarity, I have spoken separately of the major physical, psychological, and social characteristics which distinguish women from men, although obviously each molds the final form of the other, both clinically and theoretically. Investigations of animal behavior demonstrate, for example, that rat pups who are psychologically stimulated develop larger and presumably smarter brains than those exposed to sensory isolations; a litter born to a low-status African wild dog is less likely to survive than one born to a high-status female because the pups are less well fed and less protected by the pack; the male offspring of low-status baboon females, regardless of their innate characteristics, are less likely to become dominant than those born to high-status females because the latter spend more time in physical proximity to the inner circle of dominant males and learn dominance behavior; and the ovulatory cycle of a dove is retarded when a glass partition is placed between her and the rest of the flock, and it is stopped altogether if she is isolated in a room, unless there is a mirror. The interdependency between biological drive and learning is described in Konrad Lorenz’s formulation of the concept of “instinct-training interlocking behavior”: he describes this as a blend of instinctive and learned components, with instinct guaranteeing the readiness for certain kinds of learning and behavior to occur but experience shaping its final form.

In summary, females are smaller and meeker than men, they are less stable physiologically, they produce fewer androgenic hormones, and they have been socially shaped toward passivity, dependency, and conformity. Men are bigger, stronger, more aggressive, achievement-oriented, and more willing to break rules and take risks. This profile of the “normal” male and the “normal” female is consistent with the traditional differences which, until the last few decades, have prevailed for their criminal counterparts. However, the increasing “masculinization” of female social and criminal behavior forces us to reexamine the basis for her previous feminine limitations. A common-sense approach, and one followed by even such uncommon men as Freud and Adler, would suggest that what is natural to the female could be inferred from a factual description of the way the majority of females think and feel and act. Understandably, this is what has been done, and just as understandably it has been wrong….

Female Passivity: Genetic Fact or Cultural Myth?

In the past, aggression was thought to be chiefly a biologically controlled trait. As a matter of their birth and ongoing internal chemistry, males were assumed to be "naturally aggressive"—hence the explanation of their historic roles as soldiers, hard-boiled businessmen, and merciless criminals. Women, on the other hand, were thought to be innately timid, passive, and conforming. Their general failure to be anything but mothers and housewives was offered as proof of their inability to be aggressive.

Of all the differences between the sexes, only four—size, strength, aggression, and dominance—have been implicated in any way with the overrepresentation of males in the criminal system.

The first two are biological givens; the other two are largely, if not entirely, socially learned. Let us examine them separately. In non-technological societies, and in earlier periods in industrial societies, physical strength was often the final arbiter of social interaction, but even so, it was not the only one. In man as well as in the apes, psychological factors including social manipulation, ruses, and group alliances were often decisive for leadership and effective action. In animals as well as men, the battle did not always go to the strong nor the race to the swift. But even if it did, this edge has been diminished by the technology of modern weapons. The deadliness of a gun is not necessarily less dangerous in the hands of a woman—although some have claimed that her lack of aggressiveness makes her a very unlikely and ineffective gunslinger. This is an interesting assumption because it is a common stereotype and is grounded in studies of male hormonal influences on lower animals, which gives it a ring of biological authenticity. There is much truth in this, but it is only a partial truth which, when stretched beyond its limits, conveys a falsehood. The truth is that in lower animals males are characteristically more aggressive, and this aggression is so directly linked to male hormones that if the male is castrated or injected with estrogen (the female hormone) he will stop fighting. Likewise, the prenatal administration of testosterone to pregnant monkeys results in pseudohermaphroditic female offspring who even three years after birth are more aggressive than normal females. However, it would be misleading to formulate the equation androgen = aggression or estrogen = nonaggression for all but the simplest and least socially developed species. Furthermore, it cannot be claimed that aggression is the exclusive prerogative of males. Mature female chimpanzees regularly drive off lower-status males and any female mammal's defense of her cubs is as fierce as it is legendary.

But relevant as this is in establishing that aggression can co-exist with estrogen and can be unrelated to male hormones in mammals, the evidence for hormonal-behavioral detachment is even more compelling in subhuman primates and men. It is not possible to understand the behavior of social animals outside the context of a social situation. For example, an electric shock applied to an animal in a dominant position vis-à-vis another will result in an attack; the same stimulus applied to the same animal who is in a subdominant position vis-à-vis another will result in cringing, submissive behavior. Likewise, the response of anger vs. fear or fight vs. flight depends less on the release of specific chemicals than on whether we perceive the threatening stimulus, in relation to ourselves, to be smaller or larger. The human capacity for abstraction and symbol formulation extends the range of "size" to include factors only remotely related to actual mass, so that characteristics such as wealth, lineage, social connections, skill, and intelligence may be perceived as "big" and accorded dominance. In the evolutionary progression toward higher mammals, there is a decreasing dependency between hormones and behavior, and in humans we find an almost complete cultural "override" of innate drives and tendencies. Thus, while status and dominance appear to be constants throughout the order of social primates, culture defines which characteristics will be labeled as dominant.

Likewise, the distinctive sex-appropriate behaviors so rigidly controlled by hormones in lower animals have yielded to a rich variety of gender roles in human societies.

In *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*, Margaret Mead described three revealing cultural variations. In one tribe, both sexes acted in the mild, parental, responsive manner we expect of women; in a second, both sexes acted in the fierce initiating fashion we expect of men; in a third, the men were chatty, wore curls, and went shopping in the manner of our stereotype of women, while the women were their unadorned, managerial, energetic partners. She concluded that sex roles were "mere variations of human temperament, to which the members of either or both sexes may, with more or less success in the case of different individuals, be educated to approximate."

She also concluded that regardless of what social role the male plays, it is always the lead.

Regardless of what his characteristic behavior may be and even when it is imitative of "feminine behavior," it is considered high status when he adopts it. While historically and universally it is indeed a man's world, it does not follow that modern industrial man is innately more dominant than modern woman. It could be argued that the equalizing effects of a technological civilization like ours is without historical parallel and that the universal dominance of men may have resulted more from the institutionalization of man's superior strength than from any innate feminine submissiveness.

Western history is replete with examples of women who have risen above their cultural stereotype to become leaders of vigor and acclaim. Nor has their reign or tenure in office been particularly noteworthy for its tranquility, peacefulness, or lack of aggressive adventures, all characteristics of their countrywomen in the social role of housewife. These women have, in fact, displayed a remarkable talent for ruthless and highly aggressive leadership. For instance, few world leaders have ever been so renowned for their tyrannical, belligerent rule as the English queens. One can still be stirred by the picture of Elizabeth I attired with her gold crown and shining breastplate, mounted on a white stallion, and moving like an avenging angel through her army of twenty thousand men at Tilbury; ... Cleopatra of ancient Egypt, a biological woman's woman by any standards, was known for her shrewd political manipulations and insatiable appetite for military conquests; Maria Theresa was the founder of the modern Austrian state; the Russian Empress Catherine, who mothered a dozen children during her reign, still found time to annex ever-widening territories and seek new armies to defeat. In the present day, it is noteworthy that the two major countries with female rulers have both been at war within the last few years: Indira Gandhi of India and Golda Meir of Israel have shown no timidity—each, in wars across her border, has wielded political and military might as effectively as any man. Of course, such women as these who have risen to national leadership possess extraordinary characteristics which distinguish them from the mass of women—and the mass of men, for that matter. The very capacity and drive for ascension through a male world involved a selection process which would have discouraged weaker women. Notwithstanding their small numbers, the resoluteness and fortitude of such women challenge the myth of innate female passivity. On a broader scope, and one which encompassed more ordinary women, was the female incursion into criminal areas, previously considered male, during World War II. In law-enforcing as well as law-breaking, it would appear that social position and social-role expectations are more important than sex in determining behavior.

During the early 1940s, the mobilization of males from the civil to the military sector resulted in the necessity for a large number of women to fill positions previously held by men. And fill them they did, in a way not altogether anticipated. It had been known and expected that lesser men often rise to the stature of a role thrust on them by circumstance. It should not have been surprising, therefore, that "lesser men" who happen to be women would do the same thing. What was most portentous, however, about this vocational shift was not that women could assume men's jobs, but that in doing so they could also presume to men's social roles. One need not look to psychological theories to explain the enthusiasm with which women embraced men's esteemed positions. Their own, as housewife and

playmate, had been eroding for years and a desperately labor-short male establishment had further devalued it in the interests of national defense, as something akin to indolence, if not disloyalty. “Rosie the Riveter,” symbol of the women working for the war, was proclaimed a heroine in song and style by a grateful country. As the residence of female status shifted from the home to the office or factory, a trip that men had made long before, the American woman accommodated so congenially to the change that few people at the time challenged her credentials to perform. However, many were concerned that she was not just commuting to her new-found roles but might settle down to stay. In unprecedented numbers women crossed the sex-role line in their jobs and in their crimes during the war years, 1940 to 1945. In that period, the crimes committed by women almost doubled in number and even began to assume the same patterns as male crime. The trend peaked in 1945 and declined rapidly after the war with the return of men to their jobs, but it could never be the same. Women were now urged to act more like women by a male establishment which wanted to return to the position it had temporarily (it hoped) vacated. But in social evolution as in biological evolution, there is no easy road back, especially since in a very profound sense the women could not go home again. Labor-saving household appliances and the denigration of the domestic work ethic they conveyed rendered her old position untenable. In addition, there was a shift in the male attitude. Men were seeing women as worthy rivals and feeling considerably less charitable and more competitive toward them. Furthermore, in a world grown too full of people, even the once sacrosanct status of motherhood was beginning to bear unhappy resemblances to overproductive pollution. With zero population as a national goal and household drudgery an accepted epithet, where was the woman to go? The road back was blocked, and while the road forward was not completely open it was now more accessible than ever before.

The pressure was all for discarding the separate-but-equal provisions of the old social contract and opting for a chance to compete in the same field and under the same conditions as men. Unfortunately, the men were not as ready for this change as the women. Psychoanalysts, long accustomed to the futile penis envy of women, were now talking about breast envy and womb envy, an example of male jealousy toward women almost unheard of in Freud’s day.

While women proceeded to widen their social and criminal roles, many men, especially middle- and lower-class men, who had the least ground to yield in the status hierarchy, resisted in every way they could….

Gender Equality and Crime

The old ways do indeed die hard, not only because we need our stereotypes and our subdominants, but also because cognitive systems tend to become security blankets to which we cling most tenaciously just when we are most threatened. It is perhaps for these reasons that the coming of age of the Western woman was not forecast by the behavioral scientists who should have known, but instead it caught us unawares and overtook our comfortable prejudices with a fait accompli. While most were predicting that it was impossible and many were arguing that it wasn't happening, it had already occurred. It is tempting to think no deeper than an apparent fact, and it must be admitted that the "facts" of female inferiority were apparent to all who could read the figures that supported them. It did not seem productive to search out the reasons behind the figures. They were self-evident because they confirmed what we already knew about the natural superiority of men. If it were otherwise, we surely would have been told by this time. But, indeed, we were being told new "facts" in compelling ways by new figures which were challenging old theories.

In the countless indices which measure female output of degrees and income and factory production, and in the Uniform Crime Reports which tabulate her legal transgressions, these rising figures were intruding not only on our beliefs but on the mores which supported them. At first, the rising crime rates were greeted as an apparition, a mirage; at first, they were dismissed as an aberration which would correct itself by statistical adjustments; at last, they were recognized as ancient female strengths which had always been latent and were just now, at this sociotechnological juncture of history, realizing their potential. Everything we know about the history of woman and everything we see about her current behavior tells us that her past limitations as a worker and law-breaker have been largely, if not entirely, the result of her physical weakness and the cultural institutions which derived from that fact. Save only her inferiority in size and strength, her differences from men are just *that*, differences. Some confer an advantage, others a disadvantage, depending on the particular culture. In our own, given her education, aspirations (these, too, have been liberated), freedom from unwanted pregnancies, healthy assertiveness, and access to labor-saving devices, including guns, she shares the same fortunate or unfortunate criminogenic qualities as men.

I have not contended here that women are equal *to* men, simply that they are potentially the equal of men. There are many differences which we have described and no doubt more will be discovered, but all evidence points to two complementary conclusions: First, the small natural differences between the sexes have been polarized and institutionalized in special ways by different cultures to produce a gender disparity which reveals more about emotional needs of the society than about the innate possibilities of the individual. And second, when size and strength between the sexes are discounted by technology, as they have been within the ranks of men, social expectations and social roles, including the criminal roles, tend increasingly to merge.

There was a time early in the history of the physical sciences, before the concepts of mass and gravity were formulated, when the weight of an object was thought to reside within the physical boundaries of the object. Because weight is palpable and measurable, it was a conclusion which met the requirements of common sense and common experience. But the limitation of common sense is that it owes too much allegiance to the past to permit conceptual breakthroughs to the future. It is a better follower than leader. As physicists later discovered, the weight of an object is not inherent within it but rather the measure of an outside gravitational pull acting upon it. In an analogous manner, scientific thinking about human behavior has evolved in the same centrifugal direction. From the predecessors of Lombroso to the followers of Freud and into modern times, the search for the causes of female

criminality have focused on her biology with scant heed to her sociology. We have only recently recognized that the clothes of social-role expectations not only make the man, they also form the woman.

Even if it is established that humans have innate biological drives, and even if it were confirmed that females have a different biogrammar (i.e., a behavioral repertoire of signals) from males, the social forces which impinge on her from without would still be decisive for her conformist as well as her deviant behavior. In the profoundest evolutionary sense, the social factors which sustain and suspend us also create our destiny, and biology must follow where society leads.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do you think that the Women's Movement and the corresponding changes that were occurring in American society affected Adler's ideas on female crime as she wrote *Sisters in Crime*?
2. What is the liberation thesis? How does this relate to Adler's views about the "rise of a new female criminal"?
3. Why did Adler argue that biology is not the main cause of female behavior, including female criminality?
4. Think back to your own childhood and teenage years. How might the socialization practices that you witnessed while you were growing up be related to why the criminal behaviors of males and females differ?

25.
A Feminist Theory of Female Delinquency*

Meda Chesney-Lind

"There is considerable question," notes Meda Chesney-Lind (1989: 10), "as to whether existing theories that were admittedly developed to explain male delinquency can adequately explain female delinquency." But why is this necessarily the case? After all, if strain, control, or social learning are general causes of crime, might we not expect that the sources of female criminality would be the same as those of male criminality? In Chesney-Lind's view, however, such thinking renders gender socially irrelevant and behaviorally inconsequential. Yet gender is a master status in virtually every social interaction—a salient factor that provides meaning to and structures for behavioral options. As a result, growing up in the United States (and elsewhere), girls and boys have different experiences, they react to their experiences differently, and they are reacted to differently by those seeking to control them. Gender thus provides the ongoing, day-to-day contact through which crime is caused and accomplished.

The most defining feature of gender roles is "patriarchy." But it is precisely here that traditional theories of crime are most wanting. Because they were largely constructed to explain male criminality, the values and power relations inherent in male domination simply are never given any causal consideration. In methodological terms, one might say that traditional theories are "misspecified": they leave out a key explanatory variable—not merely women or gender, but what it means to be a female.

When patriarchy is used to inform one's criminological analysis, however, the special pathways that girls take into crime are suddenly illuminated. An important feature of the "patriarchal context" from which female delinquency flows, observes Chesney-Lind, is that girls are vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse. Faced with constant abuse, females can do little to fight back against their dominant male abusers. One option is to run away. Here, however, they face a second manifestation of patriarchy: They are defined as "runaways" and as sexually "promiscuous." According to Chesney-Lind, criminal justice agencies have traditionally sought to criminalize the behavior of these girls. They have played a role in tracking down the runaways and returning them to the very homes in which the victimization had transpired.

Facing extensive physical and sexual victimization at home and with little hope of protection from the state, girls find escape in the "streets." Their quest for survival, however, leads to crimes of petty theft and panhandling. But patriarchy is reproduced on the streets as well. Their sexuality is another means of survival, and thus they risk being lured into prostitution. As Chesney-Lind (1989 : 24) notes, these girls have "little else of value to trade" and thus "get involved in criminal activities that exploit their sexual object status."

The potential weakness of feminist theories is not what they include but what they exclude. Feminist scholars risk committing the same mistake as the criminologists they rightly criticize by simply dismissing—often on a priori, ideological grounds—theories they do not like. By calling perspectives "male-centered" and ignoring the related research studies, they are free to neglect the causal significance of conditions that have been shown empirically to affect not only boys' but also girls' delinquency. Traditional theories thus are useful in identifying factors that may,

in varying degrees and in unique ways, play a role in the crime and delinquency of females (Agnew, 2009; De Coster et al., 2013; Heimer and De Coster, 1999).

Even so, Chesney-Lind has shown the value of using a feminist perspective to study delinquency (see also Chesney-Lind, 2015). She has demarcated a pathway into crime—rooted in gender-related power inequities and the physical/sexual abuse girls endure—that would not be apparent without the lens of gender and patriarchy. Feminist theories are essential, therefore, because they force criminologists to take seriously the position that, however overlapping their experiences might be, boys and girls reside in different worlds that are circumscribed by the broader patriarchal system. Gender affects so much in our lives; the notion that crime would be the exception is, on its face, difficult to sustain.

References

Agnew, Robert. 2009. "The Contribution of 'Mainstream' Theories to the Explanation of Crime and Delinquency." In Margaret A. Zahn (ed.), *The Delinquent Girl*, pp. 7–29. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Chesney-Lind, Meda, 1989. "Girls' Crime and Woman's Place: Toward a Feminist Model of Female Delinquency." *Crime and Delinquency* **35**: 5–29.

____ 2015. "Gendered Pathways Into Delinquency." In Francis T. Cullen, Pamela Wilcox, Jennifer L. Lux, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (eds.), *Sisters in Crime Revisited: Bringing Gender into Criminology*, pp. 83–102. New York: Oxford University Press.

De Coster, Stacy, Karen Heimer, and Samantha R. Cumley. 2013. "Gender and Theories of Delinquency." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 313–330. New York: Oxford University Press.

Heimer, Karen and Stacy De Coster. 1999. "The Gendering of Violent Delinquency." *Criminology* **37**: 277–318.

There is considerable question as to whether existing theories that were admittedly developed to explain male delinquency can adequately explain female delinquency. Clearly, these theories were much influenced by the notion that class and protest masculinity were at the core of delinquency. Will the "add women and stir approach" be sufficient? Are these really theories of delinquent behavior as some (Simons, Miller, and Aigner, 1980) have argued?

This article will suggest that they are not. The extensive focus on male delinquency and the inattention to the role played by patriarchal arrangements in the generation of adolescent delinquency and conformity has rendered the major delinquency theories fundamentally inadequate to the task of explaining female behavior. There is, in short, an urgent need to rethink current models in light of girls' situation in patriarchal society.

… This discussion will also establish that the proposed overhaul of delinquency theory is not, as some might think, solely an academic exercise. Specifically, it is incorrect to assume that because girls are charged with less serious offenses, they actually have few problems and are treated gently when they are drawn into the juvenile justice system. Indeed, the extensive focus on disadvantaged males in public settings has meant that girls' victimization and the relationship between that experience and girls' crime has been systematically ignored. Also missed has been the central role played by the juvenile justice system in the sexualization of girls' delinquency and the criminalization of girls' survival strategies. Finally, it will be suggested that the official actions of the juvenile justice system should be understood as major forces in girls' oppression as they have historically served to reinforce the obedience of all young women to demands of patriarchal authority no matter how abusive and arbitrary….

* SAGE Publications, Inc. Journals, from Crime and Delinquency: Girls' Crime and Women's Place: Toward a Feminist Model of Female Delinquency, Chesney-Lind, Meda, 35, pages 10–11, 19–27, 1960; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

Toward a Feminist Theory of Delinquency

To sketch out completely a feminist theory of delinquency is a task beyond the scope of this article. It may be sufficient, at this point, simply to identify a few of the most obvious problems with attempts to adapt male-oriented theory to explain female conformity and deviance. Most significant of these is the fact that all existing theories were developed with no concern about gender stratification.

Note that this is not simply an observation about the power of gender roles (though this power is undeniable). It is increasingly clear that gender stratification in patriarchal society is as powerful a system as is class. A feminist approach to delinquency means construction of explanations of female behavior that are sensitive to its patriarchal context. Feminist analysis of delinquency would also examine ways in which agencies of social control—the police, the courts, and the persons—act in ways to reinforce woman's place in male society (Harris, 1977; Chesney-Lind, 1986). Efforts to construct a feminist model of delinquency must first and foremost be sensitive to the situations of girls. Failure to consider the existing empirical evidence on girls' lives and behavior can quickly lead to stereotypical thinking and theoretical dead ends.

An example of this sort of flawed theory building was the early fascination with the notion that the women's movement was causing an increase in women's crime; a notion that is now more or less discredited (Steffensmeier, 1980; Gora, 1982). A more recent example of the same sort of thinking can be found in recent work on the "powercontrol" model of delinquency (Hagan, Simpson, and Gillis, 1987). Here, the authors speculate that girls commit less delinquency in part because their behavior is more closely controlled by the patriarchal family. The authors' promising beginning quickly gets bogged down in a very limited definition of patriarchal control (focusing on parental supervision and variations in power within the family). Ultimately, the authors' narrow formulation of patriarchal control results in their arguing that mothers' work force participation (particularly in high-status occupations) leads to increases in daughters' delinquency since these girls find themselves in more "egalitarian families."

This is essentially a not-too-subtle variation on the earlier "liberation" hypothesis. Now, mother's liberation causes daughter's crime. Aside from the methodological problems with the study (e.g., the authors argue that female-headed households are equivalent to upper-class "egalitarian" families where both parents work, and they measure delinquency using a six-item scale that contains no status offense items), there is a more fundamental problem with the hypothesis. There is no evidence to suggest that as women's labor force participation has increased, girls' delinquency has increased. Indeed, during the last decade when both women's labor force participation accelerated and the number of female-headed households soared, aggregate female delinquency measured both by self-report and official statistics either declined or remained stable (Ageton, 1983; Chilton and Datesman, 1987; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1987).

By contrast, a feminist model of delinquency would focus more extensively on the few pieces of information about girls' actual lives and the role played by girls' problems, including those caused by racism and poverty, in their delinquency behavior. Fortunately, a considerable literature is now developing on girls' lives and much of it bears directly on girls' crime.

Criminalizing Girls' Survival

It has long been understood that a major reason for girls' presence in juvenile courts was the fact that their parents insisted on their arrest. In the early years, conflicts with parents were by far the most significant referral source; in Honolulu 44% of the girls who appeared in court in 1929 through 1930 were referred by parents.

Recent national data, while slightly less explicitly, also show that girls are more likely to be referred to court by "sources other than law enforcement agencies" (which would include parents). In 1983, nearly a quarter (23%) of all girls but only 16% of boys charged with delinquent offenses were referred to court by non-law enforcement agencies. The pattern among youth referred for status offenses (for which girls are overrepresented) was even more pronounced. Well over half (56%) of the girls charged with these offenses and 45% of the boys were referred by sources other than law enforcement (Snyder and Finnegan, 1987, p. 21; see also Pope and Feyerherm, 1982).

The fact that parents are often committed to two standards of adolescent behavior is one explanation for such a disparity—and one that should not be discounted as a major source of tension even in modern families. Despite expectations to the contrary, gender-specific socialization patterns have not changed very much and this is especially true for parents' relationships with their daughters (Katz, 1979). It appears that even parents who oppose sexism in general feel "uncomfortable tampering with existing traditions" and "do not want to risk their children becoming misfits" (Katz, 1979, p. 24). Clearly, parental attempts to adhere to and enforce these traditional notions will continue to be a source of conflict between girls and their elders. Another important explanation for girls' problems with their parents, which has received attention only in more recent years, is the problem of physical and sexual abuse. Looking specifically at the problem of childhood sexual abuse, it is increasingly clear that this form of abuse is a particular problem for girls.

Girls are, for example, much more likely to be the victims of child sexual abuse than are boys. Finkelhor and Baron estimate from a review of community studies that roughly 70% of the victims of sexual abuse are female (Finkelhor and Baron, 1986, p. 45); they are more likely than boys to be assaulted by a family member (often a stepfather) (DeJong, Hervada, and Emmett, 1983; Russell, 1986), and, as a consequence, their abuse tends to last longer than male sexual abuse (DeJong, Hervada, and Emmett, 1983). All of these factors are associated with more severe trauma—causing dramatic short- and long-term effects in victims (Adams-Tucker, 1982). The effects noted by researchers in this area move from the more well known "fear, anxiety, depression, anger and hostility, and inappropriate sexual behavior" (Browne and Finkelhor, 1986, p. 69) to behaviors of greater familiarity to criminologists, including running away from home, difficulties in school, truancy, and early marriage (Browne and Finkelhor, 1986).

Herman's study of incest survivors in therapy found that they were more likely to have run away from home than a matched sample of women whose fathers were "seductive" (33% compared to 5%). Another study of women patients found that 50% of the victims of child sexual abuse, but only 20% of the nonvictim group, had left home before the age of 18 (Meiselman, 1978).

Not surprisingly, then, studies of girls on the streets or in court populations are showing high rates of both physical and sexual abuse. Silbert and Pines (1981, p. 409) found, for example, that 60% of the street prostitutes they interviewed had been sexually abused as juveniles. Girls at an Arkansas diagnostic unit and school who had been adjudicated for either status or delinquent offenses reported similarly high levels of sexual abuse as well as high

levels of physical abuse; 53% indicated they had been sexually abused, 25% recalled scars, 38% recalled bleeding from abuse, and 51% recalled bruises (Mouzakitas, 1981).

A sample survey of girls in the juvenile justice system in Wisconsin (Phelps et al., 1982) revealed that 79% had been subjected to physical abuse that resulted in some form of injury, and 32% had been sexually abused by parents or other persons who were closely connected to their families. Moreover, 50% had been sexually assaulted ("raped" or forced to participate in sexual acts) (Phelps et al., 1982, p. 66). Even higher figures were reported by McCormack and her associates (McCormack, Janus, and Burgess, 1986) in their study of youth in a runaway shelter in Toronto. They found that 73% of the females and 38% of the males had been sexually abused. Finally, a study of youth charged with running away, truancy, or listed as missing persons in Arizona found that 55% were incest victims (Reich and Gutierres, 1979).

Many young women, then, are running away from profound sexual victimization at home, and once on the streets they are forced further into crime in order to survive. Interviews with girls who have run away from home show, very clearly, that they do not have a lot of attachment to their delinquent activities. In fact, they are angry about being labeled as delinquent, yet all engaged in illegal acts (Koroki and Chesney-Lind, 1985). The Wisconsin study found that 54% of the girls who ran away found it necessary to steal money, food, and clothing in order to survive. A few exchanged sexual contact for money, food, and/or shelter (Phelps et al., 1982, p. 67). In their study of runaway youth, McCormack, Janus, and Burgess (1986, pp. 392–393) found that sexually abused female runaways were significantly more likely than their nonabused counterparts to engage in delinquent or criminal activities such as substance abuse, petty theft, and prostitution. No such pattern was found among male runaways.

Research (Chesney-Lind and Rodriguez, 1983) on the backgrounds of adult women in prison underscores the important links between women's childhood victimizations and their later criminal careers. The interviews revealed that virtually all of this sample were the victims of physical and/or sexual abuse as youngsters; over 60% had been sexually abused and about half had been raped as young women. This situation promoted these women to run away from home (three-quarters had been arrested for status offenses) where once on the streets they began engaging in prostitution and other forms of petty property crime. They also begin what becomes a lifetime problem with drugs. As adults, the women continue in these activities since they possess truncated educational backgrounds and virtually no marketable occupational skills (see also Miller, 1986).

Confirmation of the consequences of childhood sexual and physical abuse on adult female criminal behavior has also recently come from a large quantitative study of 908 individuals with substantiated and validated histories of these victimizations. Widom (1988) found that abused or neglected females were twice as likely as a matched group of controls to have an adult record (16% compared to 7.5%). The difference was also found among men, but it was not as dramatic (42% compared to 33%). Men with abuse backgrounds were also more likely to contribute to the "cycle of violence" with more arrests for violent offenses as adult offenders than the control group. In contrast, when women with abuse backgrounds did become involved with the criminal justice system, their arrests tended to involve property and order offenses (such as disorderly conduct, curfew, and loitering violations) (Widom, 1988, p. 17).

Given this information, a brief example of how a feminist perspective on the causes of female delinquency might look seems appropriate. First, like young men, girls are frequently the recipients of violence and sexual abuse. But unlike boys, girls' victimization and their response to that victimization is specifically shaped by their status as young women. Perhaps because of the gender and sexual scripts found in patriarchal families, girls are much more likely than boys to be victims of family-related sexual abuse. Men, particularly men with traditional attitudes toward women, are likely to define their daughters or stepdaughters as their sexual property (Finkelhor, 1982). In a society that idealizes inequality in male/female relationships and venerates youth in women, girls are easily defined as

sexually attractive by older men (Bell, 1984). In addition, girls' vulnerability to both physical and sexual abuse is heightened by norms that require that they stay at home where their victimizers have access to them.

Moreover, their victimizers (usually males) have the ability to invoke official agencies of social control in their efforts to keep young women at home and vulnerable. That is to say, abusers have traditionally been able to utilize the uncritical commitment of the juvenile justice system toward parental authority to force girls to obey them. Girls' complaints about abuse were, until recently, routinely ignored. For this reason, statutes that were originally placed in law to "protect" young people have, in the case of girls' delinquency, criminalized their survival strategies. As they run away from abusive homes, parents have been able to employ agencies to enforce their return. If they persisted in their refusal to stay in that home, however intolerable, they were incarcerated.

Young women, a large number of whom are on the run from homes characterized by sexual abuse and parental neglect, are forced by the very statutes designed to protect them into the lives of escaped convicts. Unable to enroll in school or take a job to support themselves because they fear detection, young female runaways are forced into the streets. Here they engage in panhandling, petty theft, and occasional prostitution in order to survive. Young women in conflict with their parents (often for very legitimate reasons) may actually be forced by present laws into petty criminal activity, prostitution, and drug use.

In addition, the fact that young girls (but not necessarily young boys) are defined as sexually desirable and, in fact, more desirable than their older sisters due to the double standard of aging means that their lives on the streets (and their survival strategies) take on unique shape—once again shaped by patriarchal values. It is no accident that girls on the run from abusive homes, or on the streets because of profound poverty, get involved in criminal activities that exploit their sexual object status. American society has defined as desirable youthful, physically perfect women. This means that girls on the streets, who have little else of value to trade, are encouraged to utilize this "resource" (Campagna and Poffenberger, 1988). It also means that the criminal subculture views them from this perspective (Miller, 1986).

Female Delinquency, Patriarchal Authority, and Family Courts

The early insights into male delinquency were largely gleaned by intensive field observation of delinquent boys. Very little of this sort of work has been done in the case of girls' delinquency, though it is vital to an understanding of girls' definitions of their own situations, choices, and behavior (for exceptions to this see Campbell, 1984; Peacock, 1981; Miller, 1986; Rosenberg and Zimmerman, 1977). Time must be spent listening to girls. Fuller research on the settings, such as families and schools, that girls find themselves in and the impact of variations in those settings should also be undertaken (see Figueira-McDonough, 1986). A more complete understanding of how poverty and racism shape girls' lives is also vital (see Messerschmidt, 1986; Campbell, 1984). Finally, current qualitative research on the reaction of official agencies to girls' delinquency must be conducted. This latter task, admittedly more difficult, is particularly critical to the development of delinquency theory that is as sensitive to gender as it is to race and class.

It is clear that throughout most of the court's history, virtually all female delinquency has been placed within the larger context of girls' sexual behavior. One explanation for this pattern is that familial control over girls' sexual capital has historically been central to the maintenance of patriarchy (Lerner, 1986). The fact that young women have relatively more of this capital has been one reason for the excessive concern that both families and official agencies of social control have expressed about youthful female defiance (otherwise much of the behavior of criminal justice personnel makes virtually no sense). Only if one considers the role of women's control over their sexuality at the point in their lives that their value to patriarchal society is so pronounced, does the historic pattern of jailing of huge numbers of girls guilty of minor misconduct make sense.

This framework also explains the enormous resistance that the movement to curb the juvenile justice system's authority over status offenders encountered. Supporters of this change were not really prepared for the political significance of giving youth the freedom to run. Horror stories told by the opponents of deinstitutionalization about victimized youth, youthful prostitution, and youthful involvement in pornography (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1985) all neglected the unpleasant reality that most of these behaviors were often in direct response to earlier victimization, frequently by parents, that officials had, for years, routinely ignored. What may be at stake in efforts to roll back deinstitutionalization efforts is not so much "protection" of youth as it is curbing the right of young women to defy patriarchy.

In sum, research in both the dynamics of girls' delinquency and official reactions to that behavior is essential to the development of theories of delinquency that are sensitive to its patriarchal as well as class and racial context.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What makes Chesney-Lind's explanation of crime a "feminist" theory? How does it differ from a nonfeminist or "traditional" theory of crime? In particular, how is patriarchy central to Chesney-Lind's theory?
2. Why would Chesney-Lind criticize the work of "liberation theorists" such as Freda Adler (Chapter 24)?
3. Does Chesney-Lind believe that the causes of female crime are the same as the causes of male crime? What would she say to theorists such as Edwin Sutherland and Donald Cressey (Chapter 7) and Travis Hirschi and Michael Gottfredson (Chapters 16 and 17) who claim to have set forth "general" theories of crime that explain everyone's criminality—whether they are male or female?
4. In Chesney-Lind's theory, how does gender affect why girls turn to specific types of crime? Could nonfeminist theories explain the types of crime engaged in by girls on the street?

26.
Masculinities and Crime*

James W. Messerschmidt

Although sympathetic to radical feminism, James Messerschmidt observes that feminist analyses do not take seriously the study of masculinity. The tendency to attribute male behavior to patriarchy is reductionistic: it places all men in a single category—one in which "women are good, men are bad, plain and simple. And it is this essential badness that leads to patriarchy and violence against women" (1993: 43). But men are not all the same. In particular, gender intersects with race and class to create different "masculinities" or conceptions of what it means to be male. Understanding male behavior thus entails understanding the historical and structural conditions that construct the masculinities that structure male social action, including crime.

Messerschmidt makes the important insight that "crime by men is not simply an extension of the 'male sex role'" or, for that matter, of some male trait (1993: 85). In any social situation that males enter, they are faced with the ongoing task of showing that they are manly, of "accomplishing" their masculinity. Precisely what this entails differs by age-class-racial position in society. The meaning of masculinity varies by structural location, and in turn these meanings are "reproduced" or reconfirmed as men in these locations act to reaffirm their manly identities in the ways available to them.

In this framework, crime is seen as a resource for "doing gender"—that is, it is a way of showing that one is masculine. Messerschmidt argues that crime is most likely to occur when legitimate means of demonstrating masculinity are stifled. It is noteworthy that class and racial inequality restrict the conventional avenues for doing gender, such as success in school and in the labor market. In response to their emasculation and humiliation in these settings, juveniles and later adults develop "opposition masculinities," which involve the rejection of conventional ways of doing gender. Instead, criminal acts—from vandalism to violence—become vivid ways of showing their manliness. The end result, however, is that these criminal displays of masculinity only serve to restrict life chances and thus to reproduce existing structural inequalities.

Messerschmidt does not offer a class-biased theory. He recognizes that middle-class youths and adults also break the law, whether it is through juvenile mischief, displays of drunkenness, sexual harassment in the workplace, or white-collar crime. Still, in most ways, he sees more affluent white males as having access to and using "accommodating masculinities" that allow them to do gender in ways that accrue advantage and reinforce their gender, class, and racial dominance.

Finally, Messerschmidt recognizes that, in one way or another, all males act to do gender within the confines of the dominant conception of masculinity that teaches that heterosexual men are superior to women. Messerschmidt calls this "hegemonic masculinity," which is "defined through work in the paid-labor market, the subordination of women, heterosexism, and the driven and uncontrollable sexuality of men" (1993: 82). "Refined still further," he observes, "hegemonic masculinity emphasizes practices toward authority, control, competitive individualism, independence, aggressiveness, and the capacity for violence" (p. 82). As men do masculinity within these cultural scripts, they also reinforce their dominance over females in society.

Messerschmidt's theory can be questioned on a number of grounds: Females are omitted from the analysis; his menu listing the ways in which men can demonstrate masculinity seems narrow, ignoring, for example, being a good father, participating in voluntary organizations, talking about sports, and so on; conformity among disadvantaged groups is not easily explained; and his motivational theory—the need *to do masculinity—may over-explain many criminal acts that are committed simply because they are fun or gratifying (cf. Gottfredson and Hirschi, Chapter 17). Still, for any male who has given a "high five" after scoring a basket, who has grunted with his fellows, who has exchanged sexist jokes with "the guys," or who has performed risky acts to show he is not "chicken," the idea that masculinity is intimately involved in male behavior—including crime—has enormous intuitive appeal* (*see also Messerschmidt and Tomsen, 2015*).

References

Messerschmidt, James W. 1993. *Masculinities and Crime: Critique and Reconceptualization of Theory*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Messerschmidt, James W. and Stephen Tomsen. 2015. "Masculinities and Crime." In Francis T. Cullen, Pamela Wilcox, Jennifer L. Lux, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (eds.), *Sisters in Crime Revisited: Bringing Gender into Criminology*, pp. 281–301. New York: Oxford University Press.

Criminological theory—although traditionally written by men and primarily about boys and men—has been alarmingly gender-blind. That is, gendered men and boys have never been the object of the criminological enterprise. Feminism has challenged the overall "malestream" nature of criminology by highlighting the repeated omission and/or misrepresentation of women in criminological enquiry. The result of this critique is twofold: (1) it has increased attention to women in criminological theory and research but (2) when criminology addresses gender it speaks exclusively of women, with little or no attention directed to the impact of gender on men. Although some consideration has focused on masculinity and crime, this relationship has been examined through an essentialist, antiquated, and fallacious sex-role theory.

[I previously] demonstrated that radical feminism is not a viable alternative theory. A feminism that insists upon alleged natural differences between women and men, and goes on to explain crime committed by men in terms of that essentialism, not only homogenizes men (as does sex-role theory) but also proves itself inadequate to explaining crime committed by men. Although radical feminism is applauded for moving sexuality and gender power to the forefront of feminist thought, we are compelled to reject all forms of essentialism and reductionism….

To structure a comprehensive feminist theory of gendered crime, we must bring men into the framework. However, we should do this not by treating men as the normal subjects, but by articulating the gendered content of men's behavior and of crime. This approach requires a different theoretical lens—one that focuses on a sociology of masculinity—to comprehend why men are involved disproportionately in crime and why they commit different types of crime. In what follows, I build on the critique … by employing the insights of Giddens (1976, 1981), Connell (1987), West and Zimmerman (1987), Festermaker, West, and Zimmerman (1991), Goffman (1979), and others to present new theoretical tools for comprehending crime committed by men.

At least two significant theoretical undertakings are suggested from the criticisms outlined [previously]. First, it is essential to make the relevant theoretical links among class, gender, and race without surrendering to some type of separate systems approach (e.g., capitalism plus patriarchy). Second, it is critical to construct a theory of crime that recognizes that illegal behavior, like legal behavior, personifies synchronously both social practice and social structure. Indeed, social structures do not exist autonomously from humans; rather, they arise and endure through social practice. Social structures originate, are reproduced, and change through social practice. In short, we can only

speak of *structured action*: social structures can be understood only as constituting practice; social structures, in turn, permit and preclude social action.…

To understand why men engage in more and different types of crimes than women and in differing amounts and forms among themselves, we need an adequate account of social action. We can begin by recognizing that in society all individuals engage in purposive behavior and monitor their own action reflexively. That is, we comprehend our actions and we modify them according to (among other things) our interpretation of other people's responses. Social action is creative, inventive, and novel, but it never occurs separately from, or external to, social structures. Social structures are constituted by social action and, in turn, provide resources and power from which individuals construct "strategies of action" (Swidler, 1986: 227). Social structures organize the way individuals think about their circumstances and generate methods for dealing with them.

---

* Reprinted from James W. Messerschmidt, "Masculinities and Crime" in *Masculinities and Crime: Critique and Reconceptualization*. Copyright © 1993 by Rowman & Littlefield Publishers; reprinted by permission.

Gendered Social Action and Crime

... Masculinity is accomplished, it is not something done to men or something settled beforehand. And masculinity is never static, never a finished product. Rather, men construct masculinities in specific social situations (although not in circumstances of their own choosing); in so doing, men reproduce (and sometimes change) social structures. As Giddens (1976: 138) forcefully argues, "every act which contributes to the reproduction of a structure is also an act of production, a novel enterprise, and as such may initiate change by altering that structure at the same time as it reproduces it." ...

Hegemonic masculinity is the idealized form of masculinity in a given historical setting. It is culturally honored, glorified, and extolled, and this "exaltation stabilizes a structure of dominance and oppression in the gender order as a whole" (Connell, 1990: 94). In contemporary Western industrialized societies, hegemonic masculinity is defined through work in the paid-labor market, the subordination of women, heterosexism, and the driven and uncontrollable sexuality of men. Refined still further, hegemonic masculinity emphasizes practices toward authority, control, competitive individualism, independence, aggressiveness, and the capacity for violence (Connell, 1990, 1992; Segal, 1990). Because "most men benefit from the subordination of women, and hegemonic masculinity is the cultural expression of this ascendancy," most men engage in practices that attempt to sustain hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987: 185). Indeed, most men help maintain hegemonic masculinity (and consequently the subordination of women) by means of the practices that reflect their particular positions in society....

When men enter a setting, they undertake social practices that demonstrate they are "manly." The only way others can judge their "essential nature" as men is through their behavior and appearance. Thus, men use the resources at their disposal to communicate gender to others. For many men, crime may serve as a suitable *resource* for "doing gender"—for separating them from all that is feminine. Because types of criminality are possible only when particular social conditions present themselves, when other masculine resources are unavailable, particular types of crime can provide an alternative resource for accomplishing gender and, therefore, affirming a particular type of masculinity. For, although men are always doing masculinity, the significance of gender accomplishment is socially situated and, thus, an intermittent matter. That is, certain occasions present themselves as more intimidating for showing and affirming masculinity. As Coleman (1990: 196) states, "Such an occasion is where a man's 'masculinity' risks being called into question." The taken-for-granted "essential nature" of a man or boy can be questioned, undermined, and threatened in certain contexts, those situations where he lacks resources for masculine accomplishment.

In such predicaments, sex category is particularly salient; it is, as David Morgan (1992: 47) puts it, "more or less explicitly put on the line," and doing masculinity necessitates extra effort, generating a distinct type of masculinity. Under such conditions, performance as a member of one's sex category is subjected to extra evaluation and crime is more likely to result. Crime, therefore, may be invoked as a practice through which masculinities (and men and women) are differentiated from one another. Moreover, crime is a resource that may be summoned when men lack other resources to accomplish gender....

Crime by men is not simply an extension of the "male sex role." Rather, crime by men is a form of social practice invoked as a resource, when other resources are unavailable, for accomplishing masculinity. By analyzing masculinities, then, we can begin to understand the socially constructed differences among men and thus explain why men engage in different forms of crime....

Social Structures, Masculinities, and Crime in Youth Groups

I explore the way social action is linked to structured possibilities/constraints, identifying in particular how the class, race, and gendered relations in society constrain and enable the social activity of young men in the school and the youth group, and how this structured action relates to youth crime.

"Boys will be boys" differently, depending upon their position in social structures and, therefore, upon their access to power and resources. Social structures situate young men in a common relation to other young men and in such a way that they share structural space. Collectively, young men experience their daily world from a particular position in society and differentially construct the cultural ideals of hegemonic masculinity. Thus, within the school and youth group there are patterned ways in which masculinity is represented and which depend upon structures of labor and power in class and race relations. Young men situationally accomplish public forms of masculinity in response to their socially structured circumstances; indeed, varieties of youth crime serve as a suitable resource for doing masculinity when other resources are unavailable. These forms of youth crime, as with other resources, are determined by social structures....

In what follows, I attempt to identify certain of the chief class and race junctures in the social construction of youthful public masculinities and crimes—in particular, the important relationship between youth crime and school. The focus is on how some young men come to define their masculinity against the school and, in the process, choose forms of youth crime as resources for accomplishing gender and for constructing what I call *opposition masculinities*. I begin with white, middle-class boys.

White, Middle-Class Boys

Given the success of the middle-class Saints and Socs in school [two youth groups studied by other researchers], it is this very success that provides a particular resource for constructing a specific form of masculinity. In this type of masculinity, the penchant for a career is fundamental: a "calculative attitude is taken towards one's own life" and the crucial themes are "rationality and responsibility rather than pride and aggressiveness" (Connell, 1989: 296–297). Throughout their childhood development, white, middle-class boys are geared toward the ambiance and civility of the school. Within the school environment, for these boys, masculinity is normally accomplished through participation in sports and academic success. This participation in (or at least avid support for) sport creates an environment for the construction of a masculinity that celebrates toughness and endurance, incessantly advocates competitiveness and shame of losing, and "connects a sense of maleness with a taste for violence and confrontation" (Kessler, Ashenden, Connell, Dowsett, 1985: 39). Yet, in addition to creating this specific type of masculinity, sport is so revered and glorified within the school that it subordinates other types of masculinity, such as the sort constructed by the "brains" who participate in nonviolent games like debate (p. 39).

Over and above sport, white, middle-class masculinity in the school is typically achieved through a reasonable level of academic success. As Tolson (1977: 34–36) argues, the middle-class family supports this trajectory: "books in the home and parental help with homework provide a continuous emotional context for academic achievement"; moreover, middle-class families also tend to emphasize the importance of obtaining the appropriate qualifications for "respectable careers" that guarantee the "security" of a "profession." As Heward (1988: 8) experienced in an English boarding school, white, middle-class parents "planned their sons' futures carefully and then pursued their plans very actively, with the aim of placing them in suitable occupations and careers." For the white middle class, then, manliness is about having a secure income from a "respectable" professional occupation. Thus, there is an important link between school and family in middle-class life, and both transmit class-specific notions of hegemonic masculinity to white, middle-class boys—a particular type of work in the paid-labor market, competitiveness, personal ambition and achievement, and responsibility.

Accommodating and Opposition Masculinities

Nonetheless, hegemonic masculinity also involves practices characterizing dominance, control, and independence.... Such masculine ideals are, however, the very qualities that schooling discourages. Although white, middle-class youth generally exercise greater authority and control in school than do youth from other class and race backgrounds, research on secondary schooling reveals that adaptation to the social order of the school requires that all students, regardless of their class and race, submit to rock-hard authority relations in which students are actually penalized for creativity, autonomy, and independence (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Greenberg, 1977; Messerschmidt, 1979). In other words, white, middle-class boys, like other boys, experience a school life that is circumscribed by institutionalized authoritarian routine.

In spite of this constraint, within the school most white, middle-class boys conform, since proper credentials are necessary to attaining careers. As Greenberg (1977: 201) notes, students

> "who believe that their future chances depend on school success are likely to conform if they resent the school's attempt to regulate their lives."

Within the social setting of the school, then, white, middle-class boys accomplish gender by conforming to school rules and regulations and by dominating student organizations, reflecting a wholehearted obligation to the school and its overall enterprise. White, middle-class boys "accept" school values and therefore the school exercises a prominent and influential restraint on these youth, at least within its own boundaries (Tolson, 1977: 39).

Because masculinity is a behavioral response to the particular conditions and situations in which we participate, white, middle-class boys thus do masculinity within the school in a specific way that reflects their position in the class and race divisions of labor and power. Their white, middle-class position both constrains and enables certain forms of gendered social action, and these boys monitor their action in accord with those constraints and opportunities, thus reproducing simultaneously class, race, and gender relations. Moreover, this particular masculinity is sustained as a type of collective product in a particular social setting—white middle-class schools.

However, because the school is "emasculating" in the fashion discussed earlier, white, middle-class boys who join a youth group act outside the school in ways that help restore those hegemonic masculine ideals discouraged in school. In this process of "doing gender," these boys simultaneously construct age-specific forms of criminality. Youth crime, within the social context of the youth group outside the school, serves as a resource for masculine realization and facilitates (as do such other practices as school athletics) "dominance bonding" among privileged young men (Messner, 1989: 79).

Successful "pranks," "mischief," vandalism, minor thefts, and drinking outside the school validate a boy's "essential nature." Such behaviors reflect an age-specific attempt to reestablish a public masculine identity somewhat diminished in the school, behaviors that are purposely chosen and manipulated for their ability to impress other boys. Moreover, outside the confines of the school, white, middle-class boys' masculinity is still held accountable, not to school officials, but to other white, middle-class boys. These behavioral forms help a white, middle-class boy to carve out a valued masculine identity by exhibiting those hegemonic masculine ideals the school denies—independence, dominance, daring, and control—to resolve the problem of accountability outside the school, and to establish for himself and others his "essential nature" as a "male." Indeed, most accounts of these forms of youth crime miss the significance of gender: it is young men who are overwhelmingly the perpetrators of these acts (Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 1992: 7–18). Accomplishing gender by engaging in vandalism, "pranks," and "mischief" (as an age-specific resource) incontrovertibly provides a public masculine resolution to the spectacle of self-discipline and emotional restraint in the school.

Thus we see that white, middle-class, youth masculinity is accomplished differently in separate and dissimilar social situations. For white, middle-class boys, the problem is to produce configurations of masculine behavior that can be seen by others as normative. Yet, as the social setting changes, from inside the school to outside in the youth group, so does the conceptualization of what is normative masculine behavior.

Through class appeal for educational credentials, white, middle-class boys are drawn into a different masculine construction within the school: they develop an *accommodating masculinity*—a controlled, cooperative, rational gender strategy of action for institutional success. The white, middle-class boy's agenda within the school, then, is simply to become the accomplice to the institutional order, thereby reaping the privileges it offers—access to higher education and a professional career (Connell, 1989: 295–297). In other words, as white, middle-class boys accomplish gender in the school setting, they simultaneously reproduce class and race relations through the same ongoing practices.

Being a man is about developing the essential credentials to obtain a suitable middle-class occupation. However, because the school both creates and undermines hegemonic masculinity, within the company of peers outside the school some white, middle-class boys draw primarily on nonviolent forms of youth crime, thus constructing an

opposition masculinity—a masculinity based on the very hegemonic masculine ideals the school discourages. In short, white, middle-class boys are forming different types of masculinity that can be assessed and approved in both social settings (inside and outside school) as normal and natural. Through this specific type of youth crime in the peer group, middle-class masculinities are differentiated from one another.

The case of white, middle-class youth demonstrates how we maintain different gendered identities that may be emphasized or avoided, depending upon the social setting. White, middle-class boys construct their gendered actions in relation to how such actions might be interpreted by others (that is, their accountability) in the particular social context in which they occur. White, middle-class boys are doing masculinity differently because the setting and the available resources change.

School Success, Masculinity, and Youth Crime

Social control theorists argue that youth who develop close bonds to the school are the least likely to engage in youth crime (Hirschi, 1969; Wiatrowski, Griswold, and Roberts, 1981). Yet the considerable amount of youth crime committed by the Saints and the Socs (who were the school "wheels" and high academic achievers) outside the school justifies reasonable concern regarding this argument. Nevertheless, middle-class schools, like schools in other social settings, develop a status system based on academic success. Research has consistently shown that students who fail academically (for whatever reason) and/or who occupy the lowest status positions in school, exhibit the highest rates of youth crime. (See Messerschmidt, 1979 for a review of this research.) Consequently, for white, middle-class boys who are not successful at schoolwork and who do not participate in school sports or extracurricular activities, the school is a frustrating masculine experience as a result of which they are likely to search out other masculine-validating resources.

This view was demonstrated in one study of an upper-middle-class, white neighborhood, described by the authors as an "environmental paradise" that "harbors mansions and millionaires as well as deer and raccoons" (Muehlbauer and Dodder, 1983: 35). The particular neighborhood youth group, which called itself "the losers," was composed primarily of boys who did not do well in school and who demonstrated little athletic interest or ability. "The losers" spent considerable time "hanging out" together at the town square, but were not at all fond of interpersonal violence and controlling turf. Rather, they engaged chiefly in acts of vandalism—such as breaking streetlamps, making graffiti, destroying traffic signs, and doing donuts on the lawns of the more affluent members of the community—as well as organizing drinking parties at public beaches and parks. Indeed, the only serious violence committed by "the losers" was the firebombing of the personal automobiles of two representatives of "emasculating" authority: the chief of police and the vice-principal of the school. Thus, the specific types of youth crime engaged in by "the losers" served as a resource for masculine construction when other types of class-specific resources were unappealing and/or unattractive (e.g., academic success).

Although this opposition masculinity outside the school is clearly not the only version of white, middle-class youth masculinity, nor perhaps the most common version, it differs considerably from that of white, working-class youth, especially because of its reduced emphasis on the public display of interpersonal aggression/violence. It follows that we must consider more closely how this type of youthful, white, middle-class, masculine construction and its attendant youth crime differs from that of youthful, white, working-class men.

White, Working-Class Boys

As exemplified by the Roughnecks and the Eses [youth groups studied by other researchers], white, working-class boys engage in such acts as vandalism, truancy, and drinking because, as demonstrated more precisely below, they also experience school authority as an "emasculating" power. Not surprisingly, many of these boys also turn to this age-specific resource for "doing gender" outside the school. And yet, they define their masculinity against the school in a different way than do white middle-class boys, a way that nevertheless leads to an in-school opposition masculinity as well.

"The Lads" and the "Ear'oles"

Paul Willis's (1977) classic study *Learning to Labour* demonstrates how a group of white, working-class British boys ("the lads") reject both schoolwork and the "ear'oles" (earholes, or other young men who conform to the school rules) because "the lads" perceive office jobs and "bookwork" as "sissy stuff." The lads come to school armed with traditional notions of white, working-class masculinity: the idea that "real men" choose manual, not mental labor. Because of this particular gendered strategy, schooling is deemed irrelevant to their working-class future and "emasculating" to their conception of masculinity. In other words, schooling is unmanly in a different and broader way for these boys than for the white, middle-class boys discussed above. Accordingly, the lads evolve into an unstructured, counterschool group that carves out a specific masculine space within the school, its overwhelming rules, and unnerving authority.

In resisting the school, the lads construct behavior patterns that set them apart from both the ear'oles and also the school. Because the ear'oles are enthusiastic about schooling and support its rules, they are a major conformist target for the lads. One such practice for opposing the school and the ear'oles is "having a laff," that is, devising techniques to circumvent the controlled environment of the school....

Another activity that distinguished the lads from the ear'oles is fighting. The lads exhibited "a positive joy in fighting, in causing fights through intimidation, in talking about fighting and about the tactics of the whole fight situation" (p. 34). Constructing masculinity around physical aggression, the lads—eschewing academic achievement—draw on an available resource that allows them to distance and differentiate themselves from the nonviolent ear'oles. As Willis (p. 34) points out, "Violence and the judgement of violence is the most basic axis of the 'lads' ascendance over the conformists, almost in the way that knowledge is for teachers." The lads reject and feel superior to the ear'oles; moreover, they construct such practices as having a laff and fighting to demonstrate their perceived masculine eminence.

In this way, then, the lads accomplish gender in a specific relational way by opposing both the school and its conformists. Whereas white, middle-class boys are more likely to oppose school outside its boundaries but conform within school, the social setting for the lads is different. *They are the opposition both inside and outside the school.* Understandably, there is no accommodating masculinity here. Because schooling is conceived as unnecessary to their future while simultaneously encompassing effeminate endeavors, the lads earn symbolic space from the school by engaging in different forms of "pranks" and "mischief" within the school itself. Such behaviors help transcend the "sissyish" quality of the school day while simultaneously distancing the lads from the conformists.

But the lads also draw on forms of physical intimidation and violence to differentiate themselves from the ear'oles and the girls. For the lads, the fight "is the moment when you are fully tested"; it is "disastrous for your informal standing and masculine reputation if you refuse to fight or perform very amateurishly" (p. 35). In fact, physical aggressiveness seems to be an institutionalized feature of the lads' group. As Willis (p. 36) notes, "the physicality of all interactions, the mock pushing and fighting, the showing off in front of girls, the demonstrations of superiority and put-downs of the conformists, all borrow from the grammar of the real fight situation." These activities provide the fodder with which to accomplish their gender and to establish (for the lads) their "essential male nature." They are designed with an eye to gender accountability and resultingly construct inequality among boys by attempting to place the ear'oles' masculinity beneath their own within the public context of the school. The lads are constructing an opposition masculinity as a collective practice; notwithstanding, this specific type is significantly different from the white, middle-class in-school accommodating masculinity and gains meaning in relation to the masculinity of the ear'oles.

Outside the School

It is not only conformists to the school whom white, working-class youth, like the lads, attempt to subordinate in the process of doing gender. In Western industrialized societies, what have become known as hate crimes—racist and anti-gay violence—are disproportionately committed by groups of white, working-class boys, crimes that can also be understood in the way discussed above (Beirne and Messerschmidt, 1991: 562–563; Comstock, 1991: 72–92).

For some white, working-class boys, their public masculinity is constructed through hostility to, and rejection of, all aspects of groups that may be considered inferior in a racist and heterosexist society. For example, the ear'oles are considered inferior and subordinate to the lads because of their conformity to, and seeming enjoyment of, effeminate schooling projects. But other groups outside the school are also viewed as inferior by many white, working-class boys. Willis (1977: 48) found that different skin color was enough for the lads to justify an attack on, or intimidation of, racial minorities. Indeed, the meaning of being a "white man" has always hinged on the existence of, for example, a subordinated "black man." Thus, a specific *racial gender* is constructed through the identical practice of racist violence; a social practice that bolsters, within the specific setting of white, working-class youth groups, one's masculine "whiteness" and, therefore, constitutes race and gender simultaneously. White, working-class, youthful masculinity acquires meaning in this particular context through racist violence.

Moreover, for some white, working-class youth, homosexuality is simply unnatural and effeminate sex, and many turn this ideology into physical violence. As one white, working-class youth put it, "My friends and I go 'fag-hunting' around the neighborhood. They should all be killed" (Weissman, 1992: 173). Gay bashing serves as a resource for constructing masculinity in a specific way: physical violence against gay men in front of other young, white, working-class men reaffirms one's commitment to what is for them natural and masculine sex—heterosexuality. In other words, the victim of gay bashing serves, "both physically and symbolically, as a vehicle for the sexual status needs of the offenders in the course of recreational violence" (Harry, 1992: 15). Accordingly, gender is accomplished and normative heterosexuality is reproduced.

White, working-class boys such as the lads construct public masculinities outside the school in other ways as well. As with the Roughnecks and the Eses, the lads also occasionally participate in various forms of theft. Because they want to take part in the youth culture (go to pubs, wear the "right" clothes, date, and so on) shortage of cash becomes "the single biggest pressure, perhaps at any rate after school, in their lives" (Willis, 1977: 39). Through contacts with family and friends, many of the lads acquired part-time, after-school, and summer jobs; in fact, Willis found that it is not uncommon for these youths to work over ten hours a week during the school year. Consequently, "this ability to

‘make out’ in the ‘real world’ … and to deal with adults nearly on their own terms” is seen by the lads as evidence of their “essential nature” as “males”—a practice that reproduces this specific type of white, working-class masculinity (p. 39). In addition, because of their access to paid employment, the lads’ involvement in theft is irregular rather than systematic, providing a little extra pocket money when needed….

In this specific context, then, intermittent theft is a resource that helps construct an “out-of-school,” autonomous, independent, and daring opposition masculinity. And with part-time work available as a masculine resource, outside the school these white, working-class youths only sporadically turn to theft as a resource to accomplish gender. Thus, theft not only provides these youth with a resource for doing masculinity in the specific social setting of the group, it also helps construct a gendered line of action in which future gender accountability may be at risk. That is, it contributes to the wherewithal for adequate masculine participation in the youth culture.

Yet while the part-time workplace and youth group are initially seen as superior to the school—a milieu where masculinity as they know it is accepted—these working-class boys eventually find themselves locked into dead-end jobs, making less money than those who did not participate in the group and who conformed to the school. In this way, Willis’s books show how white “working-class kids get working-class jobs.” The initial context, and ultimate result, of the lads’ opposition masculinity in the school was an orientation toward manual labor. Through their specific construction of masculinity, the lads themselves (and, similarly, the Hamilton Park boys) thus reproduced class, race, and gender relations as the structures constituted in those relations constrain and enable their collective social action.

Lower-Working-Class, Racial-Minority Boys

Consider now how this white, working-class opposition masculinity (and the white, middle-class masculinity discussed earlier) differs from youth masculinity of lower-working-class racial minorities who engage in youth crime. Because these youth have no access to paid labor (as have the lads and Hamilton Park boys) and their parents are unable to subsidize their youth culture needs (as are the parents of white, middle-class boys), the youth gang in lower-working-class, racial-minority communities takes on a new and significant meaning inasmuch as it is here where resources are available with which to sustain a masculine identity. For many of these youths (although far from all), life is neither the workplace nor the school; it is the street....

For many lower-working-class, racial-minority boys, the street group has become both a collective solution to their prohibitions and a life-style that sometimes takes the form of street crime. For these youths, then, street crime becomes a "field of possibilities" for transcending class and race domination and an important resource for accomplishing gender.

Opposition in School

Most white, middle-class boys envision a future in mental labor and members of the white, working-class (such as Willis's lads and Sullivan's Hamilton Park youths) realistically anticipate manual-labor positions. Consequently, these youths have resources (and a future) for masculine construction that are unavailable to lower-working-class, racial-minority boys. For marginalized, racial-minority boys, no such occupational future can be realistically anticipated and, accordingly, hegemonic masculinity is severely threatened. Under such conditions, life inside school takes on a significantly different meaning....

Because the school is seen simply as another institutional impediment to a future in hegemonic masculine ways and because they lack the resources of white, middle-class and working-class boys, these young men are more likely to turn to those hegemonic masculine ideals that remain available, such as physical violence.

Physical violence within the school is a resource employed for masculine construction. In situations where class and race structural disadvantage are severe, one's taken-for-granted "essential nature" is more likely to be undermined and threatened; therefore, gender is held more accountable. In short, at the level of personal practice, this translates into a display of physical violence as a specific type of in-school, opposition masculinity....

Thus, for lower-working-class, racial-minority boys in the process of opposing the school, doing masculinity necessitates extra effort; consequently, they are more likely than other boys to accomplish gender within the school by constructing a physically violent opposition masculinity. And in doing so, they turn to available hegemonic masculine ideals with which to construct such masculinity. This physical violence in the school is one practice that differentiates lower-working-class opposition masculinity from the other types discussed earlier.

Opposition Outside School

In addition to opposition within the school, because the school has less significance to these youths than to young men in other social classes, the street group also takes on a distinct and significant meaning in which opposition

masculinity outside the school is likewise quite different from that of other youths. Marginalized, racial-minority boys are disproportionately involved in such serious property crimes as robbery and in such publicly displayed forms of group violence as "turf wars" (Steffensmeier and Allen, 1981; Elliott and Huizinga, 1983; Tracy, Wolfgang, and Figlio, 1991). The roots of this violent street crime are found in the disconcerting nature of the school and in the social conditions of poverty, racism, negated future, and power accorded men. Because of these social conditions and their attendant possibilities/constraints, young ghetto men are the most likely to commit certain types of street crime and thus to construct a different type of opposition masculinity outside the school....

Sullivan and others (Zimring and Zuehl, 1986: Conklin, 1972) have reported that most robberies are committed by a group of young street men. Within this collective setting, robbery is a means of getting money when other resources are unavailable, and is particularly attractive for young boys on the street. Robbery provides a public ceremony of domination and humiliation of others. Because young street boys are denied access to the labor market and are relegated to a social situation (the street group) where gender accountability is augmented, they are more often involved in crimes that entail actual or possible confrontation with others. As such, robbery provides an available resource with which to accomplish gender and, therefore, to construct a specific type of public masculinity—what Katz (1988: 225–236) terms "hardmen," or men who court danger and who, through force of will, subject others to it.

"Doing stickup" is doing masculinity by manufacturing *"an angle of moral superiority* over the intended victim" and, thereby, succeeding "in making a fool of his victim" (pp. 169, 174)....

The robbery setting provides the ideal opportunity to construct an "essential" toughness and "maleness"; it provides a means with which to construct that certain type of masculinity—hardman. Within the social context that ghetto and barrio boys find themselves, then, robbery is a rational practice for "doing gender" and for getting money....

Marginalized, racial minority boys—as with white, middle- and working-class boys—produce specific configurations of behavior that can be seen by others within the same immediate social situation as "essentially male." As we have seen, these different masculinities emerge from practices that encompass different resources and that are simultaneously based on different collective trajectories. In this way, then, class and race relations structure the age-specific form of resources used to construct specific opposition masculinities. Young, middle-class, working-class, and lower-working-class men produce unique types of masculinity (situationally accomplished by drawing on different forms of youth crime) by acknowledging an already determined future and inhabiting distinct locations within the social structural divisions of labor and power. Collectively, young men experience their everyday world from a specific position in society and so they construct differently the cultural ideals of hegemonic masculinity.

Opposition masculinities, then, are based on a specific relation to school generated by the interaction of school authority with class, race, and gender dynamics. For white, middle-class boys, a nonviolent opposition masculinity occurs primarily outside school; for white, working-class and lower-working-class, racial-minority boys, specific types of opposition masculinities prevail both inside and outside school. Yet for each group of boys, a sense of masculinity is shaped by their specific relation to the school and by their specific position in the divisions of labor and power....

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the concept of "masculinities" help to revise views of men held by both feminists and traditional criminologists?
2. Why do youths in different class and race locations in society engage in different amounts and types of crime?
3. Why is crime a matter of "doing gender"? Are there other ways to "do gender"?
4. Think back to your days in high school. Can you give any examples of how masculinity was involved in some delinquent act that you witnessed?

27.
Getting Played*

Jody Miller

In this work, Jody Miller builds off of Sampson and Wilson's (1995) theory of race, urban inequality, and crime (see Chapter 28) and presents a theory of race, urban inequality, and gendered victimization. Much like Sampson and Wilson's theory, Miller's theory combines an emphasis on the deleterious effects of neighborhood-level structural disadvantage with a recognition that ecologically structured norms supportive of violence also play an important causal role in the violence racking many of today's urban black communities. However, Miller goes a step further in exploring the implications of this inner-city violence on the lives of young women, as they are frequently the victims of the violence stemming from a street code that emerges in contexts of extreme disadvantage—a code that demands that men publicly command respect through toughness, violence, and sexual prowess (Anderson, 1999).

Miller presents qualitative data from in-depth interviews with 75 African American youths (35 females, 40 males), ranging in age from 12 to 19. All subjects came from highly distressed St. Louis neighborhoods. Her interviews reveal that young males' adoption of a street code often means that young women are witnesses to physical, domestic violence against women and are also the objects of sexual harassment and sexual assault. In short, Miller's interviewees indicate that public space in disadvantaged, African American communities is men's space, by and large. Public space is the stage whereon young men command respect according to the rules of the code of the street. Unfortunately, the victimization of women often establishes credibility for men ensnared by the code.

Miller's qualitative research corroborates yet enriches previous quantitative research highlighting the excessive rates of violent victimization among disadvantaged, African American young women in comparison to those among women in other racial groups or socioeconomic settings (Benson et al., 2003; Lauritsen and Schaum, 2004).

References

Anderson, Elijah. 1999. *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Benson, Michael L., Greer L. Fox, Alfred DeMaris, and Judy Van Dyke. 2003. "Neighborhood Disadvantage, Individual Economic Distress and Violence Against Women in Intimate Relationships." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **19**: 207–233.

Lauritsen, Janet L. and Robin J. Schaum. 2004. "The Social Ecology of Violence Against Women." *Criminology* **42**: 323–357.

Miller, Jody. 2008. *Getting Played: African American Girls' Urban Inequality and Gendered Violence*. New York: New York University Press.

Sampson, Robert J. and William Julius Wilson. 1995. "Toward a Theory of Race, Crime and Urban Inequality." In John Hagan and Ruth D. Peterson (eds.), *Crime and Inequality*, pp. 37–54. Stanford, CA: Stanford

University Press.

Youths in disadvantaged communities have few opportunities for socializing with their peers—a normal facet of adolescent development—that do not include some exposure to delinquent peer groups. As discussed [here], drugs, gangs, and the congregation of young men in public spaces are an omnipresent feature of youths' neighborhood and community action spaces, and unsupervised parties and get-togethers are a primary means of spending time with other adolescents. Participation in such activities, particularly when combined with delinquency, heightens young women's risk for victimization, including the types of gendered victimization I examine here.

In fact, such social ecological factors have been linked to the exceptionally high rates of victimization of African American girls. In recent analyses of the National Crime Victimization Survey, criminologist Janet Lauritsen reveals this stark reality. African American girls' risks for violent victimization are dramatically higher than for adolescent girls from other racial groups. In fact, their risks for nonfatal violence are nearly equal those for African American boys. These findings counter the conventional wisdom in criminology that women's risks for victimization are consistently lower than men's. Indeed, Lauritsen reports that African American girls' risk for non-stranger violence, including in their neighborhoods, is *higher* than that of any other group, including their African American male counterparts. Importantly, her analyses reveal that the relationship between race and victimization is accounted for, in large part, by factors associated with highly distressed urban communities. Thus, it is acute poverty and its associated social contexts that structure urban African American young women's high risk for gendered victimization….

All of the youths interviewed for this project lived in the city of St. Louis. The vast majority lived in neighborhoods that fit the academic designation "highly distressed": neighborhoods characterized by intense racial segregation; disproportionate rates of poverty, unemployment, and female-headed families; and high rates of crime. In fact, St. Louis was an ideal site in which to conduct this research, because it typifies the highly distressed urban city and includes large concentrations of extreme disadvantage that result in social isolation, limited resources, and high levels of violence. We hear these descriptions again and again in scholarship on neighborhoods and crime, but how do young people in disadvantaged communities—both female and male—describe and experience their neighborhoods? What is it like to grow up and live in such communities, and to navigate daily adolescent life in this terrain? An exploration of these questions can provide a more vivid portrait of the study setting, which helps situate the subsequent examination of how such social contexts are associated with violence against young women….

---

* Jody Miller, 2008. *Getting Played: African American Girls, Urban Inequality, and Gendered Violence*. New York: New York University Press.

Disadvantaged Neighborhoods and Violence Against Women

Studies of community violence rarely make distinctions between violence against women and other violent events. However, youths' discussions of neighborhood risks clearly emphasized its gendered dimensions. In fact, recent research has found that—in addition to other forms of violence—violence against women is also heightened in disadvantaged communities. Recall that Michael Benson and his colleagues suggest that the higher prevalence of violence against women in disadvantaged communities is linked to both the social isolation present in such communities and the difficulties these neighborhoods have in developing collective efficacy. In addition, research on offender networks suggests that public violence against females is quite common and highly visible.

In fact, three facets of violence against women were present in youths' accounts of their neighborhoods: exposure to public incidents of physical violence against women, including intimate partner abuse; young women's complaints of widespread sexual harassment in neighborhoods; and incidents of sexual assault and coercion. Most youths, like scholars, initially thought of urban crime in their neighborhoods in terms of masculine endeavors—gangs, drugs, and guns. However, once they were asked directly about forms of violence that target women specifically, they had plenty of stories to recount.

Witnessing Physical Violence Against Women

Though scholars typically assume that intimate partner violence occurs primarily behind closed doors, many of the youths here described witnessing such incidents in public view. Youths' accounts of such incidents may seem somewhat peripheral to their own lives, particularly since much of the public violence they described involved adults and rarely included individuals they were intimately familiar with. In actuality, such incidents are quite meaningful, because they impart essential messages about how violence against women is to be interpreted and responded to. Thus, it is important to pay attention here not just to the descriptions that youths provided but also to the tone and implications of many of their comments. These provide evidence of the interpretive lenses brought to bear on such events, illustrating how youths were taught to think about violence against women.

Asked whether she had ever seen a man hurt a woman in her neighborhood, Tisha responded:

> Yeah, it's this girl next door. I don't know if she a crackhead or what, her boyfriend just always beatin' her up. She always comin' [over], like, "Call the police for me!" But then when the police get there she don't wanna press charges or nothin' like that. I don't know, I guess she stuck on stupid. She like getting beat up I guess.

Tisha said that the woman "done let him [back] in [her home] over and over, and she know what he gon' do to her. So that's on her. We don't call the police for her no mo'. Just let her get beat up." Because, in Tisha's eyes, the woman had not taken sufficient action to extricate herself from the abusive relationship, she was seen as culpable and thus unworthy of further assistance.

In addition, Tisha speculated about whether the woman was a "crackhead." Other youths also referenced substance abusers in their descriptions of violence. Christal said she had seen "crack-heads fightin' they boyfriends," and Tawanna described seeing a "prostitute standing around" who got beat up. Such labels functioned to distance the victims from the young women who witnessed the events and to suggest that the violence was deserved and the victim blameworthy because of her status. Gail said it was "lil' drunk, alcoholics [that] be fightin' up the street … just

lil' drunkies, drunk people just gettin' drunk. Crackheads, drunks, you know.... We'll be laughin' at 'em or whatever." ...

Tami described a recent incident she witnessed involving the man across the street, who was routinely abusive toward his girlfriend:

> I don't know what they was arguing about. When he came outside he was telling her to get her stuff, and she don't run it, he run it. He be hittin' her upside her head and she be, "Why you hittin' me? Stop hittin' me!" and stuff. But she don't be fightin' him back or nothin'. He be hittin' her ... upside her head, she was just walkin' down the steps.

Asked how she reacted upon seeing the man hitting his girlfriend, Tami explained:

> We was laughin'. Then we was like, that's a shame and they shouldn't put up with that stuff. They should go on, leave, but I guess they ain't got nowhere else to go so they just put up with the stuff.... But we figured it wasn't none of our business. It came outside [so] we was just lookin' to see what was goin' on.

Tami's comments suggest that her reaction to the event was complex. On the one hand, she and her friends found it an amusing public spectacle. On the other hand, Tami expressed some empathy for the woman she felt was likely trapped in the situation. Finally, she noted that it "wasn't none of our business," indicating the important norm of staying out of others' affairs....

Sexual Harassment in Neighborhoods

In addition to witnessing physical violence against women in their neighborhoods, a common problem described by young women and corroborated by young men was the routine sexual harassment of girls.... Two kinds of neighborhood sexual harassment emerged in youths' accounts: sexual come-ons or comments by young men in the neighborhood, and harassment by adult men, which girls often found much more ominous.

Sexual harassment by adolescent peers. Young men's behavior was described as problematic in two situations: when they engaged in inappropriate sexual banter or touching with girls they were friends with, and when they approached young women they didn't know. Cherise complained about the behavior of some of the young men she hung out with in the neighborhood:

> When we be playing or something, they try to touch me on the fly. But we usually don't fight over it. We might, you know, I might just push him or something 'cause they might be cool.... I don't know what they might be thinking, but maybe they might try to take advantage of you or something.... I just know that they try to touch me and I don't like it.

Nicole exhibited a similar ambivalence when describing the behavior of her male friends in the neighborhood: "You gon' have to watch out for them boys though.... They just got problems, that's what I think. But they cool though, I hang out with 'em. But they'll say lil' [sexual comments], but they won't say nothin' nasty.... They be playin' with you." While Nicole appeared uncomfortable with the young men's sexual banter, she went along with some of it because she enjoyed their company. She continued, "they'll make you laugh with 'em, you know. They like to have fun or whatever, make you laugh." Thus, she vacillated between interpreting their behavior as "playful" and problematic.

In fact, Nicole's ambivalence was even more apparent when we consider the question that elicited her comments: "Do you think girls face any particular dangers in the neighborhood?" While she ultimately interpreted her friends' behavior as "playful," her discomfort was evidenced by the fact that her account was triggered by a question about the risks young women face in the neighborhood. Later in the interview, she was more explicit about her concerns. Asked how the neighborhood could be made safer for girls, she said:

> I think it could be made safer if the boys would think 'fore they talk. You know, you should always think.... Like you come up to a lady, you should approach her in a better way instead of being like, "Ah, yo' when we gon' do this? When we gon' fuck?" Naw, un-un. You ain't suppose to do that. You should just ask her, "Would you go with me? Would you be my lady?" You know, ask her in a appropriate way, you know, don't just come up to her like she a hooker or something.

When neighborhood friends were the ones engaging in this behavior, young women would typically negotiate the situation so as not to escalate to a conflict or damage the friendship, despite their discomfort with the young man's behavior. Young men used "play" claims to explain their behavior, which girls sometimes went along with, though seemingly uneasily. Jamal explained, "we don't try to take advantage of them.... We probably just have fun with them. Try to play with them. Jamal emphasized what he described as "joking" sexual banter, noting: "Taking advantage [is] like grabbing or touching them, we don't do that. You might catch one or two try to slap a girl on the butt, that's the most." Likewise, Raymond said, "the only time I see girls get hit on [is] when they playing around."

In addition to negotiating "play" banter with male friends, a number of girls complained about how boys approached them in the neighborhood, including those they didn't know or know well. Nicole's earlier comments are illustrative. Similarly, Alicia described what happened after a young man came up to her friend and "said, 'girl, you fine. Why don't you back that ass up?'" Alicia's friend "told him don't come to her like that, that's real disrespectful," but the young man replied, "'How is that disrespectful?'" In fact, some young men seemed oblivious to (or at least feigned ignorance of) girls' interpretations of such sexual comments. For instance, asked whether he knew of males in the neighborhood who tried to take advantage of girls, Tony replied, "naw, I don't know nobody that do that.... They [just] be tryin' to mack. Probably be like, 'Hey baby, can I get your number?' or something, or 'I want to get to know you.'" Reminded that during the survey he indicated that girls could be uncomfortable with such behaviors, Tony said, "oh yeah, sometimes when they just be playin'. But I don't think they be meanin' it though.... Probably be sayin, 'You ugly,' callin' em B's [bitches] and stuff, then they'll laugh." Though he admitted that such incidents may feel serious "to the girl," Tony insisted that young men "don't be serious" when they behave in such ways.

While Tony downplayed the significance of such behavior, Dwayne was highly critical:

> It was a girl walking down the street, she had some little shorts on and a little top. And at first [the guy] try to talk to her, and she didn't want to talk to him. So he touched her and she told him not to put his hands on her no more or she gonna go get her big brother. He done slapped this girl. So she went to go get her big brother and stuff. That's how stuff be getting started. That's how people be getting killed ... putting they hands on people they don't even know....

Sexual harassment by adult men. Young women expressed greater apprehension and less ambivalence about sexual harassment by adult men in the community. These incidents, more so than incidents involving peers, heightened girls' sense of vulnerability and made them fear for their safety. Nykeshia explained:

> The one person I feel uncomfortable around in my neighborhood [is a man that] always askin' me to do something [sexual] with him. And I told my momma about it and she told me, "Just stay away from him, as far as you can, and I hope he stay away from you." She called the police about it 'cause he had asked me in front of my momma.... He just denied everything and they was like, "We don't have proof that he asked you that ... we [can't] do nothin' about that."

Girls felt that they were a particular target for adult men in the neighborhood because they were teenagers and thus seen as easy to take advantage of. Young women expressed great discomfort about being sexualized by adults and, consequently, tended to be especially leery of groups of men.

Young men also described the widespread nature of adult male harassment of adolescent girls. Andrew said in his neighborhood, "females get harassed so much." He believed it posed a real danger for young women:

> Like an older person come through and they'll see a young girl walking through. She can have a pretty shape, pretty face or whatever, and they'll see her and they'll try to dog [her]. They try to talk to her or whatever, and the female will tell them no, or that they're too young or they too old for them, or they not interested. They get mad and get to calling them bitches and ho's, disrespecting them. [Then the girls] get mad, they get to cussing them back out. Sometimes the dudes get mad and threaten 'em, saying, "I'll do this to you," or "I'll do that." … And a woman know they can't whoop a dude, so.

Andrew surmised that "older guys" targeted teenage girls because "I guess they feel like with a younger girl they can take advantage of them." He described being upset when his younger sister was targeted: "See like I got a little sister, and I feel bad when she come home and say a man came and did this to her and tried to do that or whatever.… It makes me mad to the point where if I see the dude that did it, it feel good to fight him. But it ain't gonna prove nothing, so ain't no point.… I mean, a man gonna be a man regardless." …

Several young women described a final, related form of harassment that resulted from living in areas with active drug markets: the threat they believed drug addicts could pose to them, and the dangers of being mistaken for a drug-addicted woman themselves. LaSondra described a recent incident:

> It was nighttime. See, my mistake. I was walking by myself from my friend's house, at first she was watching. This man was a crackhead, he ran up behind me and say, "You know [where I can get] drugs?" And I said "No." So he ran across the street, bought some crack, and ran back down her block. I turned and I was walking, I was at the corner of my block, and as I was going in the house, before I got in the house, this man pulled up and said, "You need a ride girl?" …

Sexual Assault and Coercion in Neighborhoods

Sexual assault was also an ongoing neighborhood danger for young women. In fact, the girls in this study reported very high rates of sexual victimization. More than one-half (54%) reported some form of sexual victimization, including rape (29%) or attempted rape (14%), or being pressured or coerced into unwanted sex (43%). Nearly one-third (31%) reported multiple sexual victimizations. These are staggering figures, especially considering that the average age of the young women we interviewed was just sixteen.…

Sexual assaults and sexually coercive behaviors in youths' neighborhoods were often an extension of the broader sexualized treatment young women experienced. This is largely why young women were so leery of groups of men. As with sexual harassment, young women's risks for sexual assault and coercion were varied. Among peers, alcohol and drugs were often used to lower a young woman's level of awareness or incapacitate her. Rapes involving physical force more frequently involved adult men, though they happened with peers as well.…

Ricky said young women in the neighborhood were particularly at risk in the context of parties: "They have to be extra careful about leaving. And they have to watch what they do. [Watch their drinking] and getting high. I mean, you got some smooth talkers in our neighborhood, so." Asked why he thought the guys in his neighborhood did that to girls, he explained:

> I think it's just to get a image, a name. To make theyselves look big.… I can't really explain it. A lot of guys do it just so other guys can be like, "Aw, man, he'll do this" or "He'll do that." Like for example, "We did this and we did that, and it was [so-and-so's] gal." Most of 'em just do it for a name, man, just for a image. Try to look like something they not.

Thus an important feature of girls' sexual abuse was the status rewards such behavior provided within male peer groups. In addition to Ricky's emphasis on young men's attempts to build a name for themselves through their coercive sexual conquests, Lamont suggested that disadvantaged neighborhoods gave rise to young women he defined as "freaks": "In the ghetto, every ghetto I can tell you … you see all these … freaks.… It's babies, little bitty babies walking around with coochie cutters [tight-fitting shorts] on. You know that they gonna grow up to be freaks.

Just 'cause you know what they been influenced by." In some cases, the early sexualization of girls likely made them vulnerable to sexual abuses in adolescence….

LaSondra described being raped by a man as she walked home from her friend's house one night. She said "it was dark, nobody was outside." As a precaution, her friend "walk[ed] me half the way, and I crossed over to go home and she walked back the other way." LaSondra was passing through a gas station on her way home when the man approached her. "He was just looking at me, and he said, 'I seen you and your friend earlier.'" The man then got LaSondra into his car and raped her: "He was heavy-set, he be holding me down, like I can't run, I can't get away." Afterward:

> He just dropped me off in this one spot and then he just pulled off. It was so scary, I was shaking, I was crying, I was running, you know, trying to find somewhere to go. I seen some people that went to my school and they let me use they phone and I called my momma. I tell my momma everything that happened and so she took me to the hospital and she called the police. The detective peoples came over and stuff and she talk to them and they didn't find him…. I was crying, shaking like all night in the hospital bed having flashbacks….

Conclusion

Three overarching themes emerge in youths' discussions of the gendered dimensions of neighborhood dangers. First, youths' accounts indicate that young men were much more likely to be active participants in neighborhood-based street networks. Their neighborhood descriptions (where boys spoke of "I" and we," while girls spoke of "they"), their depictions of young men's (but not young women's) neighborhood risks being explicitly associated with gangs and drugs, and their accounts of girls' treatment on the streets all reveal that public community space was, in many ways, *male* space. Though this was particularly the case at night—when young women suggested that dangers lurked largest—male domination of public spaces was nonetheless ubiquitous.

Second, many facets of neighborhood risk were structured by gender, and youths brought gendered perceptual frameworks to their understandings of neighborhood violence. Like other forms of violence, violence against women was both widespread and highly visible. Youths recounted witnessing public violence against women around their neighborhoods, and young women expressed concern about the pervasive sexualization they faced, including sexual harassment by adolescent and adult men and their fears and experiences with sexual assault in their neighborhoods.

Third, neighborhood residents' (including adolescents') responses to violence against women were decidedly unhelpful to the victims, as were their experiences with the police. Victim-blaming attitudes were widespread, among both young women and young men, and norms favoring nonintervention often won out, frequently leaving female victims to fend for themselves. In some cases, such violence even became a source of entertainment, particularly when youths were in the company of their peers.

For adolescent young women, the public nature of violence against women likely had a meaningful impact. Its visibility created a heightened vigilance and awareness among girls of their own vulnerability, but it also resulted in coping strategies that included victim-blaming as a means of psychologically distancing themselves from such events. To the extent that violence could be seen as something that happened to *other* women and girls—those who could be understood as "deserving" of it—young women could construct a sense of self that they believed shielded them from such risks. Moreover, in a setting where norms were not favorable for intervention into violent events, the result was that youths became desensitized to such violence. Because the ability to stand up for oneself is a key avenue for respect in disadvantaged communities, girls who failed to do so—particularly when their actions could render them culpable in some way in the eyes of others—faced sanction, at the very least in the form of lack of empathy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Based on Miller's research, what is meant by "getting played"?
2. According to Miller's work, how does the "code of the street" impact women in disadvantaged communities?
3. Does Miller's work support the notion of violence being racialized? Being gendered?
4. Is Miller's work supportive of structural theories of race and crime? Is it supportive of cultural theories of race and crime?

PART IX

HOW BLACK LIVES MATTER: THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Francis T. Cullen
University of Cincinnati

Robert Agnew
Emory University

Pamela Wilcox
Pennsylvania State University

In 2008, the Pew Charitable Trusts published the astounding figure that 1 in every 100 adults in the United States was behind bars. When probation and parole populations were included, 1 in every 31 adult Americans was found to be under some form of correctional supervision (Pew Center on the States, 2009). A confluence of events, however, combined to create a turning point in American corrections in which many citizens and elected officials questioned the wisdom of mass imprisonment (Petersilia and Cullen, 2015). Thus, the financial crisis that led to the Great Recession induced many politicians concerned about budget deficits to temper their states' use of imprisonment. Punitive attitudes in the United States, such as support for capital punishment, diminished steadily (Enns, 2016; Pickett, 2019), and crime rates fell to near historic lows (James, 2018; Zimring, 2012). In response, the number of those incarcerated in prisons and jails declined from a high in 2008 of 2.31 million to 2.12 million in 2018 (Maruschak and Minton, 2020). With recent inmate releases due to the risk posed by the coronavirus in institutions (Vose et al., 2020), the nation's inmate count reportedly has dipped, at least for now, to under 2 million (Kang-Brown et al., 2021). Still, if dented a little, mass imprisonment and mass community supervision remain a stubborn reality. On given day, more than 6.4 million people—1 in every 40 adults—is under supervision by the U.S. correctional system (Maruschak and Minton, 2020).

As disquieting as these statistics are, they mask a more disturbing reality. When the data are disaggregated by race, the Pew investigations show that young African American men are at inordinate risk of incarceration. In the 2008 study, 1 in 15 black men ages 18 and older were behind bars; for those ages 20 to 34, the figure was 1 in 9 (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2008: 6). And in the 2009 study, 1 in 11 black adults over 18, compared to 1 in 45 whites, were under some form of correctional supervision. The lifetime imprisonment risk for African American males is 1 in 3, whereas for whites the risk is less than 5% (Sampson and Bean, 2006). For those now in prison, 1 in 7 is serving a life sentence, of which two-thirds are people of color. For black men imprisoned, the figure for life sentences is 1 in 5 (Nellis, 2021). Another study found a clear racial divide in having a family member locked up for over one year: 10% for whites versus 31% for African Americans (Enns et al., 2019). These numbers illustrate what Todd Clear (2007: 3) calls "the problem of concentrated incarceration." As he notes:

> Prison populations have grown mostly through society's locking up ever-increasing numbers of young men, especially black men, largely from impoverished places. The concentration of imprisonment of young men from disadvantaged places has grown to such a point that it is now a bedrock experience, a force that affects families and children, institutions and businesses, social groups and interpersonal relations. (Clear, 2007: 3)

Why is this the case? An important part of the problem is that although African Americans are no more likely to use or sell drugs than whites, they are sent to prison far more often and for far longer prison terms. "No honest observer," concludes Tonry (2011: 53), "can deny that racial disparities in imprisonment are substantially attributable to the War on Drugs." But there is another stubborn reality that also fuels the differential involvement of blacks and whites in the correctional system. Although racial differences in most forms of crime are trivial at best, one stark and enduring difference in criminal participation exists: African Americans are disproportionately involved in serious violent offenses.

In *A Peculiar Indifference: The Neglected Toll of Violence on Black America*, Elliott Currie (2020) documents the staggering costs of such violence—even during a time when rates of urban violence have declined (Sharkey, 2018; Zimring, 2012). Currie had data available for the first 18 years of the current century. Between 2000 and 2018, he calculated that African Americans experienced more than 162,000 homicide deaths, a figure seven times higher than that for whites. For young black men (ages 15–29), the black–white death ratio is sixteen to one; for young black women that ratio is four to one. The racial disparity is so pronounced, observes Currie (2020: 22, emphasis in the original), that "a *sixty-year-old* black man remains three times as likely to suffer a violent death as a white man of thirty (which, again, was the age of *highest risk* for white men in America in 2018)." Currie (2020) captures the human tragedy involved by citing a public health measure of "years of potential life lost"—that is, years not lived because a person has died before an age cut-off point such as 65. "Though blacks are just 13 percent of the US population," notes Currie (2020: 31), "they account for over half of all years of life lost to violence in the twenty-first century." The racial disparity is striking: "For black men, homicide is the *leading* cause of years of life lost before the age of sixty-five. For white men, it ranks eighth" (Currie, 2020: 31, emphasis in the original).

Place matters as well (see Currie, 1985, 2020; Peterson et al., 2006; Weisburd et al., 2012). High rates of violent crime are not evenly distributed across neighborhoods. Rather, they are disproportionately concentrated in segregated black neighborhoods marked by extreme poverty and surrounded by similar communities. These are the places that Sampson and Bean (2006: 8) have termed the "killing fields."

Given the centrality of race to violent crime in the United States, it might be expected that this connection would be a major concern for prevailing theories of crime. But although some notable exceptions exist—exceptions that we will discuss—most theories have paid only passing attention to sources of crime among African Americans and in their communities (see Cullen et al., 2019). When theories are initially formulated, race tends not to be mentioned at all. At the individual or "micro" level, empirical tests of theories generally treat race as a control variable and not as a theoretical variable (Unnever et al., 2009). On the community or "macro" level, where the analysis focuses on how crime rates vary across ecological units such as neighborhoods or cities, more systematic attention has been paid to race—in part, we suspect, because racial variations in living conditions and crime are harder to ignore. Still, far more work needs to be done to unpack the special experiences that minority groups face that make crime, especially being shot to death, a daily reality and not a freakish tragedy.

Part of the lack of focused concern on race can be traced to the view that the causes of crime are the same for African Americans and whites. This contention has been the hallmark of sociological theories that rejected early racist explanations that attributed crime among people of color to innate moral and intellectual degeneracy. The sociological position was that people are people, and they go into crime for the same reason: they are exposed to

criminogenic social factors. If higher rates of crime occur among blacks, this is because they face more social disadvantages that are at the root of wayward conduct.

At the micro level, the sociological position is usually captured by saying that scholars are presenting "general," as opposed to "race-specific," theories of crime. At the macro level, the position has been called the "racial invariance thesis"—that is, the view that race "holds no distinct scientific credibility as a cause of violence" and that "the community-level causes of violence are the same for both Whites and Blacks" (Sampson and Bean, 2006: 8).

The problem with the generality approach is that it can lead to race being ignored. Let us take the work of Travis Hirschi, who has made monumental contributions to theoretical criminology through his social bond and (with Michael Gottfredson) self-control theories (Costello, 2013). A staunch advocate that the causes of crime and antisocial behavior overall are general, Hirschi has argued since the publication of *Causes of Delinquency* in 1969 that blacks and whites enter crime for the same reasons. But does this mean that race can then be safely dispatched to the criminological dustbin? Does this mean that we do not have to pay attention to race—that this is a factor of no theoretical significance?

In *A General Theory of Crime*, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) note that although self-report data do not show large black–white differences in delinquency, official crime data (e.g., compiled by the FBI) reveal disparities in participation for more serious offenses. But why is this so? Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990: 153) argue provocatively that "research on racial differences should focus on differential child-rearing practices"—which they contend is the source of low self-control—and "abandon the fruitless effort to ascribe such differences to culture and strain" due to structural inequality. Let us assume that Gottfredson and Hirschi are correct that ineffective child-rearing produces lower levels of self-control among black youngsters that in turn accounts for racial differences in crime. Is their theoretical work now completed? If they were to take race seriously, would they not then present a theoretical model of the factors that cause African American parents to struggle more with child-rearing? Might this not have something to do with the structural factors (e.g., changing labor force opportunities) that have disrupted black family formation and stability within the nation's inner cities (Wilson, 1987)? Might it not have something to do with the challenges of parenting kids in high-rise public housing neighborhoods where gang members "hang out" on the local street corners? The fact that blacks and whites often live in very different social worlds does not seem to be of theoretical interest. We contend that Gottfredson and Hirschi's general theory would have been enriched if race had been drawn to the center of their theory rather than pushed to its periphery.

It also is possible to take the generality argument too far. There is no doubt that criminogenic risk factors have general effects (see Bonta and Andrews, 2017). But this does not mean that race-specific factors are of no significance. In his classic *The Philadelphia Negro* (originally published in 1899), W. E. B. Du Bois (1973) was reluctant to attribute most black crime to racial animus (see also Greene and Gabbidon, 2000). Still, he noted that although the "connection of crime and prejudice" is "subtle," he also warned that it is "dangerous" (1973 [1899]: 351). In essence, he was concerned that when African Americans are unfairly blocked from advancement, it breeds an "atmosphere of rebellion and discontent that unrewarded merit and reasonable but unsatisfied ambition make" (p. 351). Du Bois then concluded:

> How long can a city say to part of its citizens, "it is useless to work; it is fruitless to observe well of men; education will gain you nothing but disappointment and humiliation!" How long can a city teach its black children that the road to success is to have a white face? How long can a city do this and escape the inevitable penalty? (p. 351)

More than a century later, this kind of government-supported racial oppression has been all but purged in the United States. But the enduring effects of a history of racial oppression linger not only in the persistence of racially segregated impoverished neighborhoods but in the "lived experience" of blacks versus whites (Feagin and Sikes, 1994; Peterson and Krivo, 2010). Most whites generally do not think about race. As Sniderman and Piazza (1993:

154) note, white Americans "neither suffer from the problem of racial inequality, nor see themselves responsible for it." For African Americans, however, life is not so simple. Even if treated equitably in most interactions with whites, they risk encountering instances of discrimination, from being denied a job by a prejudiced employer to being watched closely by a shopkeeper or being stopped by the police when they have done nothing wrong (Pew Research Center, 2016). "On views of race and inequality," reports the Pew Research Center (2016: 1), "blacks and whites are worlds apart." To cite one finding from a national survey, African Americans are far more likely (70% to 36% for whites) to say that racial discrimination is a "major reason" why "blacks may have a harder time getting ahead than whites" (2016: 3). African Americans are also much more likely than whites to report that the criminal justice system is unjust and to fear that they might experience police brutality (Graham et al., 2020; Unnever et al., 2009; see also Hagan et al. 2005; Henderson et al., 1997). Do these race-based experiences and perceptions matter? Do they matter for at least some African Americans, fueling, as Du Bois worried, a sense of humiliation and rebelliousness? This possibility cannot be dismissed out of hand but must be subjected to empirical and theoretical analysis.

James Unnever and his colleagues (2019) argue that exploring these possibilities requires the conscious creation of a "Black Criminology." They do not deny that there are general causes of crime. However, they propose that race cannot be stuffed into a regression equation as a control variable or into a theory in an ad hoc fashion. Rather, they assert that race must be the *starting point* in any attempt to explain African Americans' criminal involvement. This approach is very similar to that taken by the advocates for a feminist criminology who have insisted that analyses of women and crime begin with a focus on patriarchy and the gendered nature of social relationships. Unnever and Owusu-Bempah (2019: 6) outline three assumptions that should inform efforts to build a Black Criminology:

1. A Black Criminology assumes that Whites purposefully constructed a racially stratified society that oppresses African Americans.
2. A Black Criminology assumes that because the United States has been and is a racialized society, the history of African Americans is incomparable to the histories shared by Whites (and other minorities).
3. A Black Criminology assumes that a minority of African Americans commit crimes because of their inimitable past and current racial subordination.

Fortunately, some prominent scholars have been "paying attention to race" in recent years. Part IX of this book attempts to capture their insights. In this introduction, we thus divide up the discussion into five topics: structural theory, cultural theory, coercive mobility theory, the New Jim Crow theory, and perceived discrimination theory. These categories are offered for heuristic purposes—as a way of helping readers distinguish among the various perspectives. In reality, however, most theories incorporate elements of more than one of these perspectives into their explanatory model. The placement of theories into a specific category thus has more to do with which factors scholars most emphasize in their causal discussions.

Structure

Structural explanations for racial differences in crime owe a great deal to the pioneering work of Judith and Peter Blau. In their now-famous 1982 article "The Cost of Inequality: Metropolitan Structure and Violent Crime," Blau and Blau provide a theory linking racial differences in crime with between-race economic inequality. In laying out their theory, they first distinguished between two types of economic inequality—achieved and ascribed. According to Blau and Blau, economic inequality that appeared rooted in differences in achievement (e.g., educational attainment) is likely to be seen as just. In contrast, they posited that economic inequality based on ascribed statuses—like race—is

likely viewed as illegitimate, unjust, and thus conducive to motivating frustration, resentment, and higher rates of violence among those in the relatively deprived groups (see, e.g., Lee, 2010; Ousey and Lee, 2013).

The logic of Blau and Blau's theory suggests that economic inequality between blacks and whites should affect black rates of violence, but not white rates of violence. However, they were not able to test their theory with data broken down or "disaggregated" by race (such data were not available at the time). Still, they did find support for the effect of economic inequality on overall violent crime rates in an analysis of U.S. Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas. Advancements in data availability since Blau and Blau's famous 1982 work have been able to examine race-specific rates of violence. While such studies have yielded mixed evidence, it is important to note that a number of them have found little evidence that the degree of economic inequality between races is related to black rates of violent crime (Hipp, 2007; Sampson, 1985; Harer and Steffensmeier, 1992). Therefore, contemporary structural theory has tended to move away from Blau and Blau's idea that between-race *economic* inequality alone motivates high rates of black violence. Instead, structural explanations for race differences in crime are increasingly grounded in different work, including that of William Julius Wilson (1987). Wilson suggests that, beyond economic deprivation, the spatial arrangement of black communities in relation to white communities is critical (e.g., Shihadeh and Flynn, 1996).

William Julius Wilson's 1987 seminal book *The Truly Disadvantaged* details profound, interrelated demographic, social, and economic changes in many U.S. inner cities (particularly those in the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, and Midwest) in the post–World War II era, especially between 1970 and 1980. These demographic and socioeconomic shifts combined with discriminatory policy to create a historically unique structural milieu for many African American communities. For example, an economic shift from a manufacturing economy to a "deindustrialized" service economy caused extensive loss of jobs in the urban core, where many industries were located. In turn, this deindustrialization of the economy created widespread unemployment and delayed marriage among a substantial number of inner-city residents with minimal education—those who had previously relied upon industrial jobs. These changes coalesced to create predominantly single-parent and deeply impoverished inner-city households. Further, segregated housing policy offered few choices for poor blacks outside of the inner city, thus ensnaring many of them in the job-deprived urban neighborhoods. Whites, on the other hand, increasingly moved out of the declining central cites (i.e., "white flight"). Middle-class blacks also fled, though not as far, since their options were typically constrained. The overall pattern of out-migration left an unprecedented *concentration of economic disadvantage* in deindustrialized central-city neighborhoods in the United States. More residents of the inner city than ever were poor, black, and segregated from those with jobs, higher incomes, and family stability (i.e., two-parent households). In essence, economic disadvantage had become increasingly racialized, and poor, urban, black communities had become *spatially* and *socially isolated* from mainstream society.

Sampson and Wilson's 1995 work, "Toward a Theory of Race, Crime, and Urban Inequality" (see Chapter 28 in this part) builds upon Wilson's description but presents a theory more explicitly intended to explain community-level racial differences in crime (for a more recent commentary, see Sampson et al., 2018). They claim that the extreme disadvantage and social/spatial isolation of inner cities serve to alter the cultural landscape of the inner city. In particular, Sampson and Wilson (1995: 50) argue that "cognitive landscapes"—or norms regarding appropriate standards, expectations of conduct, and tolerances of behavior—are shaped in inner-city communities such that "crime, disorder, and drug use are less than fervently condemned and hence expected as part of everyday life." Sampson and Wilson explain that these cognitive landscapes are *ecologically structured norms*, or norms that stem from a disadvantaged context rather than representing a monolithic subculture (see also Hannerz, 1969; Sampson and Bean, 2006; Sampson and Jeglum Bartusch, 1998; Suttles, 1968; Warner, 2003). Hence, it is not that crime, disorder, and drug use are *valued*, according to Sampson and Wilson, but they are *tolerated and accepted* because mainstream behaviors in extremely disadvantaged contexts become "existentially irrelevant" (p. 51). Still, Sampson and Wilson do not shy away from delineating the importance of these norms in community rates of crime. They

attribute causal significance to them in presenting a view that the tolerance/acceptance of unconventional behaviors creates a context in which these behaviors can flourish. When unconventional behavior is tolerated/accepted, it is seen with greater frequency. When it is seen with greater frequency, "the transmission of these modes of behavior by precept, as in role modeling, is more easily facilitated" (Sampson and Wilson, 1995: 51).

Sampson and Wilson offer that their framework is helpful for understanding the relationship between race and crime in the United States. They suggest that the causes of black rates of crime versus white rates of crime are not different. Instead, the causal significance of extreme disadvantage and ecologically structured norms is purportedly applicable to both rates. Consistent with a "racial invariance hypothesis," Sampson and Wilson argue that if whites and blacks experienced equivalent levels of community disadvantage and isolation, then racial differences in cultural attenuation and crime would disappear. However, blacks are disproportionately embedded in community contexts characterized by structural disadvantage and ecologically structured norms that tolerate crime.

Subsequent research finds mixed support for the idea of a racially invariant effect of concentrated disadvantage. For instance, Lauren Krivo and Ruth Peterson's analysis of Columbus, Ohio, neighborhoods revealed that the effects of measures of structural disadvantage on community crime were much more pronounced than the effects of the racial composition of the neighborhoods (percent black). Further, while it was the case that black neighborhoods were much more likely than white neighborhoods to be extremely disadvantaged, the effects of extreme disadvantage on crime were not worse in African American neighborhoods (Krivo and Peterson, 1996). In similar research on a larger and more varied national sample of neighborhoods, Peterson and Krivo (2010) found that differences in disadvantage were able to account for the higher rates of property crime in minority neighborhoods. However, gaps for violence were much larger across racial contexts, and structural disadvantage was able to explain only part of the differences in violence across neighborhoods of varying racial composition.

Culture

At the time that Sampson and Wilson were proposing their theory of structurally rooted cognitive landscapes, Elijah Anderson was in the midst of a decade's worth of scholarship involving ethnographic study of Philadelphia neighborhoods. Disadvantaged, predominantly black North Philadelphia was most prominently featured in his work. Anderson's research on North Philadelphia was reported in several articles and two prominent books—*Streetwise* (1990) and *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City* (1999 [see Chapter 10, Part III]). The main point of emphasis in Anderson's work is the delineation of a "street code," or set of informal rules that govern public interaction in disadvantaged, socially isolated neighborhoods like North Philadelphia. The code, according to Anderson, provides rules of interaction because conventional rules are not helpful and/or not apparent in this context. The code dominates inner-city life and ultimately is suggested to be causally related to unconventional behavior, including crime.

The street code prioritizes public displays of respect. Anderson's research subjects talked of "commanding respect" or "juice." In other words, it is important that individuals be treated "right." Respect, or "juice," is difficult to obtain, but the code also provides ideas about how it can be campaigned for and won. For instance, some of the main ways for gaining respect according to the code are through "the look" (e.g., the right attire, gait, hair), sexual prowess, physicality, toughness, violence, payback, and revenge. Thus, according to the street code, violence is actually normative and seemingly valued. Displays of physicality, toughness, violence, payback, and revenge are important not only for respect purposes, however. They are, as Anderson describes it, essential for survival; self-protection is a must in communities that are socially isolated from mainstream individuals and institutions, including police. In

fact, as alluded to above, it is that social isolation that is part of the reason for the emergence of the code in the first place, according to Anderson (1999: 10): "The code of the street emerges where the influence of the police ends and personal responsibility for one's safety is felt to begin…."

While the code of the street is thought to pervade public life in the inner city (all must follow its rules in public), Anderson is clear that not all those who reside in the inner city actually *believe in* the morality expressed in the code. Instead, he describes two competing value orientations characterizing families in the inner city, termed "decent" and "street." Anderson describes decent families as accepting mainstream values. They value hard work, self-reliance, education, and religion, and the parents in decent families instill these same values in their kids through strict child-rearing practices. Street families, in contrast, are described by Anderson as having parents who are "sporadic" (e.g., children are often unsupervised, without parental contact), ill-equipped emotionally and physically (e.g., anger, resentment, drug addiction), and aggressive in their child-rearing (e.g., yelling and hitting). Their aggressive child-rearing includes socialization into the code, whereby children are taught to fight at an early age and respond with violence when crossed.

Scholars have debated whether Anderson's street code is an example of a deviant subculture or structurally rooted attenuation of mainstream culture, similar to Sampson and Wilson (see, e.g., Warner, 2003). On the one hand, Anderson explicitly describes the street code as *consciously opposing mainstream values*, and such a description is consistent with the notions of value conflict and a deviant subculture (e.g., Anderson, 1999: 33). Similarly, his comparison of decent versus street indicates *moral* distinctiveness. On the other hand, Anderson's description of decent individuals, *who comprise the majority of residents*, is reminiscent of structurally based cultural attenuation. The fact that this majority espouses middle-class values but mimics the code publicly nonetheless (through code switching) suggests that the code is not enduring or pervasive throughout the community. The code may dominate public life, but if conferred only through public mimicry, then the code may be situational rather than stable. Finally, Anderson is clear that the code emerged in the first place as an adaptive response to the extreme disadvantage and social isolation, so his perspective shares similarities with Wilson's (1987, 1996) and Sampson and Wilson's (1995) work just a few years prior:

> The inclination to violence springs from the circumstances of life among the ghetto poor—the lack of jobs that pay a living wage, the limited basic public services (police response in emergencies, building maintenance, trash pickup, lighting, and other services that middle-class neighborhoods take for granted), the stigma of race, the fallout from rampant drug use and drug trafficking, and the resulting alienation and absence of hope for the future. (Anderson, 1999: 32)

A less ambiguous aspect of *Code of the Street* is its suggestion that culture—whether oppositional or attenuated—can affect community rates of crime. In fact, though other scholars had been suggesting this (in a variety of theoretical forms) for over half a century, perhaps no work to date has stimulated as much subsequent research attention than has Anderson's *Code*. With Anderson's ethnographies serving as inspiration, numerous quantitative studies have been conducted recently in an attempt to show more systematically the combined effects of structure and culture on community rates of crime. Studies testing the ideas put forth in Anderson's *Code of the Street*, specifically, have attempted to demonstrate a process whereby neighborhood disadvantage facilitates the emergence of a culture consistent with Anderson's portrayal of the street code and, in turn, the presence of a street code increases levels of violence. Ideally this process is examined in macro-level research, as "disadvantage" and "culture," as used by Anderson, are properties of collectives. Yet neighborhood-level data on street culture are particularly difficult to obtain, so there are few data sources available for community-level studies of Anderson's ideas. For that reason, tests of the influence of street culture have tended to fall into one of two types: (1) neighborhood-level studies linking disadvantage to certain types of violence that are presumed to be driven by a street culture (though such a culture is not directly measured), or (2) individual-level studies linking the level of disadvantage in a person's neighborhood to

his or her personal adherence to a set of beliefs consistent with Anderson's notion of "street culture" and, in turn, his or her individual violent behavior.

A good example of the former type of study was published by Kubrin and Weitzer in 2003. Using homicide data from St. Louis neighborhoods, they found that community-level concentrated disadvantage was significantly and positively related to community rates of "culturally retaliatory homicides"—those homicides rooted in revenge or payback for disrespectful actions. While Kubrin and Weitzer did not have access to direct measures of "street culture" in the St. Louis neighborhoods, they did have access to the homicide reports provided by St. Louis police. The reports and the interview narratives contained within allowed Kubrin and Weitzer to classify homicides as being consistent with Anderson's discussion of street-code violence—what they termed "culturally retaliatory homicides"—or otherwise. Neighborhood-level disadvantage was more strongly related to culturally retaliatory homicides than other types of homicide, lending support for Anderson's idea that extreme structural disadvantage spawns a code supportive of vengeful violence that is particularly harmful to communities.

Stewart and Simons (2006) provide a good example of a test of Anderson's ideas using individual-level data. Using data on over 700 African American youth from both Georgia and Iowa (as part of the Family and Community Health Study—FCHS), their study indicated that neighborhood disadvantage positively affected street-code beliefs. Street-code beliefs, in turn, were significantly and positively related to violent behavior, controlling for neighborhood disadvantage (see also Stewart et al., 2002). Furthermore, the effect of street-code beliefs on violence was important, even controlling for family characteristics (i.e., "decent" or "street" family orientation). In another example of an individual-level test of Anderson's ideas, Brezina et al. (2004) analyzed longitudinal data on over 700 young males who had participated in the National Youth Survey. Their results showed that an individual's "code-related beliefs"—condoning violence when provoked, for instance—was positively and significantly related to his subsequent violent behavior.

A 2010 study by Stewart and Simons extends their earlier work (described above) by analyzing their FCHS data using multilevel models, allowing them to examine the effect of a *neighborhood-level street culture*, independent of individual-level street-code beliefs. Such an approach is considered to be more closely aligned with the spirit of Anderson's work in that a "street code" is measured as an emergent property of a collective rather than an individual-level trait. Yet, since it controlled for individual differences in pro-violence beliefs, it minimized the likelihood that effects of neighborhood-level street culture could simply be chalked up to self-selection of violence-prone people into high-violence neighborhoods. This latter study by Stewart and Simons showed that neighborhood-level street culture did, indeed, affect violent behavior above and beyond the effect of individual-level street-code beliefs. Furthermore, neighborhood-level street culture magnified the positive effects of individual-level street-code beliefs on violence.

Some previous research examining Anderson's ideas has focused on the implications of a street culture for violent *victimization* as opposed to violent *offending*. Anderson described the code as producing high rates of violence, but he also suggested that individuals who adhered to the code did so for reasons of self-protection. The aggressiveness and toughness portrayed by "street" people generated respect, including respect from potential assailants. In short, adhering to the code deterred violent victimization. Stewart et al. (2006) tested this notion in analysis of the FCHS data from African American males in Georgia and Iowa. Their results did not support the idea that adherence to the code reduced violent victimization risk. Instead, adherence to the street code increased violent victimization risk, controlling for neighborhood conditions and a variety of individual-level characteristics. The positive effect of street-code adoption on violent victimization was enhanced, or exacerbated, as neighborhood levels of violence increased. Hence, rather than the code serving as a protective factor in the most crime-ridden neighborhoods among those who adopt it, the code instead seemed to further enhance victimization risk.

Jody Miller's qualitative research on school-aged adolescents in extremely disadvantaged neighborhoods in St. Louis also points to the detrimental effects of the street code in terms of victimization (see Chapter 27, Part VIII). Her work, however, is unique in that it highlights the heightened risk of victimization experienced by young *women*. As indicated earlier, the code of the street described by Anderson suggests that sexual prowess is one way young men can gain respect from their peers. Miller further asserts that negative stereotypes of women within the code validate the mistreatment of women. These elements of the code place young women in communities with a strong street culture at particularly high risk for physical abuse, sexual harassment, and sexual assault. In fact, the majority of young women interviewed by Miller indicated that they had witnessed violence against other women, that young men had made sexual comments that made them (the women) feel uncomfortable, and that young men had grabbed or touched them in a way that made them feel uncomfortable. The men that Miller interviewed tended to define the actions as "play"; such actions were considered fun and status-enhancing within the male peer group. The women, on the other hand, saw them as "playin' *too much*" (Miller, 2008: 82–83, emphasis in the original).

One final consideration is relevant. Much of the research on the code of the street was conducted in the 1990s when urban violence was high. Although violence remains a serious concern—as the statistics cited above show (Currie, 2020; see also Abt, 2019)—there has been, in Sharkey's (2018) words, "a great crime decline" that has diminished the risk of victimization in many neighborhoods. Even with the recent, much-publicized rise in violent crime, the murder rate in the 1990s was about twice what it is today (Horton, 2021). Part of this long-term decline in crime has been attributed to the expanded presence of criminal justice in these areas, including not only mass imprisonment but also aggressive policing (Zimring, 2012). As Sharkey (2018: 29) notes, a number of recent studies have documented how concerns of young men in these neighborhoods have shifted "from the threat of violent peers to the threat of abusive police."

Fear of police violence in the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd is high among a majority of Blacks in America (Pickett et al., 2021). Still, these concerns present special challenges in inner-city residents where police are disproportionately deployed. In a study of 45 men ages 25–34 in a Philadelphia neighborhood, Fader (2021: 293) shows how "men of color" adapt to the "expansion of the criminal legal apparatus and the unpredictable nature of their interactions with its agents and enforcers" through "network avoidance" —in practical terms, by staying home as much as possible. This attempt to manage risk "turns their homes into virtual prisons" and "effectively erases young men of color form the public sphere in the same way that incarceration removes them from their communities, with considerable costs for the men themselves and for their neighborhoods" (Fader, 2021: 293). The impact of criminal justice in the lives of at-risk individuals and their communities is examined in the next two sections.

The New Jim Crow

In 2010, Michelle Alexander published *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (see also Alexander, 2011, Chapter 30 in this part). The book appeared just as the mass imprisonment era was reaching its end and a turning point in U.S. corrections was at hand. The context thus was conducive to hearing her message about the devastating consequences that criminal justice expansion had on African Americans. Alexander masterfully unmasked these unjust costs in her book, revealing a truth many Americans had not confronted—so much so that *The New Jim Crow* sold more than one million copies and was on *The New York Times* bestseller list for a combined 250 weeks (Chan, 2020).

Alexander's perspective rests on four central observations. First, she documents that the era of mass incarceration extended state control over Americans in diverse ways. Most of the focus attends to the 2 million or so offenders locked up on any given day. But recall that nearly 4.4 adults also are on probation or parole—making for a correctional population of more than 6.4 people (Maruschak and Minton, 2020). Based on the crimes compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (2020: Table 29), more than 10 million arrests are made annually. It is estimated that more than 20 million Americans have a felony conviction, and that between 70 and 100 million have some type of criminal record (Burton et al., 2021; Jacobs, 2015).

Second, she further documents what we showed earlier: large racial disparities exist in criminal justice involvement. Alexander zeroed in on the insidious effects of the War on Drugs. Although drugs are sold "everywhere," blacks are thirteen times more likely than whites to be admitted to a state prison on a drug charge. "The racial bias inherent in the drug war," she notes, "is a major reason that 1 in every 14 black men was behind bars in 2006, compared with 1 in 106 white men" (2010: 98).

Third and most important, she revealed that the punitive, exclusionary treatment of offenders—again who are disproportionately black—does not end with release from prison or correctional supervision. Most troubling, legislatures have passed laws that impose extra restrictions—called "collateral consequences"—on those with criminal records. One count places these statutes and regulations at more than 44,000 (Burton et al., 2020). These legal standards impose an array of disabilities on offenders. They can mandate ineligibility to receive government educational and welfare benefits, exclusion from many jobs (especially those requiring a license), and denial of the privilege of voting and serving on juries (Binnall, 2021; Burton et al., 2020; Manza and Uggen, 2006).

These civil and economic disabilities create a reality for black offenders that approximates the status of African Americans during the Jim Crow era in Southern states—when people of color suffered a lifetime of economic discrimination and, most salient, of political disenfranchisement. Today's "new" Jim Crow, however, comes with an especially pernicious quality: it has the appearance of colorblindness and is not confined to the South. Because legal collateral consequences are attached to criminal conviction regardless of race, it can be argued that they are colorblind and not rooted in a system of racial oppression. It is just a matter of "the law," which applies "to everyone equally." But as Alexander exposes, this cynical view ignores the empirical reality of the racial disparities that afflict the American justice system in an era of mass incarceration.

Fourth, although not presenting a formal criminological theory, Alexander asserts that the new Jim Crow has untoward consequences. Essentially outlining a race-specific labeling theory, she notes how involvement in the justice system—often due to arrest for drug offenses—and the subsequent imposition of collateral consequences ensnare blacks (especially young black men) in criminal roles. They are part of a subordinate "racial caste" (Alexander, 2011: 23; see also Wilkerson, 2020). Disproportionately drawn from impoverished communities, they face the added burden when released from prison or community supervision of *lifetime* economic and civic exclusion that is legal and state imposed. This adds to the informal discrimination that justice-involved individuals face, particularly for minorities seeking employment (Pager, 2007). Carving "out a positive identity," notes Alexander (2010: 166), becomes difficult in a "society that offers them little more than scorn, contempt, and constant surveillance." "Self-defeating and destructive" as it is, these young men embrace "criminality" as a "natural response to stigma" (2010: 166). Our collective reaction is typically counterproductive. "When we are done shaming them," laments Alexander (2010: 167), "we throw up our hands and then turn our backs as they are carted off to jail."

Notably, writings such as Alexander's *The New Jim Crow* have had a significant impact on criminal justice policy. The popularity of her writings reflects both the power of her message and an audience willing to listen to it. In the post-mass-imprisonment era, an array of reforms have been passed that reduce collateral consequences, extend voting privileges to convicted offenders, make it possible to expunge criminal records, and require employers not to

ask job applicants about past criminal records until the interview stage of the hiring process ("ban-the-box" statutes). Recent research shows that the American public supports these initiatives (Burton et al., 2020; Burton et al., 2021).

Coercive Mobility

Chapter 29 in this part, by Todd Clear, illuminates yet another factor behind the race–crime relationship: the collateral consequences of mass incarceration in poor, minority communities. Clear points out that mass incarceration has not impacted all communities equally. Rather, "imprisonment has been concentrated among poor, minority males who live in impoverished neighborhoods." He argues that such neighborhoods suffer from a host of problems as a result of their high incarceration rates. In particular, high rates of incarceration generate population instability within the hardest-hit neighborhoods, with large numbers of men cycling through prison and then back into the community. This coercive mobility generates family disruption, reduced family earnings, and negative attitudes toward the criminal justice system. In short, imprisonment of large numbers of men in poor, minority communities can exacerbate structural and cultural disorganization. These problems, in turn, reduce the ability and willingness of residents to exercise effective social control over one another, thus leading to more crime as opposed to less crime (see also Rose and Clear, 1998). That is, high rates of incarceration lead to a breakdown in informal community control of crime (see Part II). Not surprisingly, Clear argues that we should sharply reduce the number of people who are incarcerated and, as an alternative, make use of "community justice programs" and increase social support of various types.

Clear's arguments are intriguing. Incarceration has been promoted as a way to make poor (often minority) communities safer, but Clear contends that our high rates of incarceration have the opposite effect. Clear and others have begun to examine the effects of incarceration on communities. Certain research supports Clear's arguments, suggesting, for example, that high rates of incarceration in a community contribute to family disruption and, ultimately, lead to higher rates of crime (Clear, 2007; Clear et al., 2003; for a review see Frost and Clear, 2013). Other research has supported Clear's arguments that, beyond the disruption caused by the loss of community men to prison, large influxes of men back into communities post-release (i.e., "prison cycling") is also detrimental. For example, Hipp and Yates's (2009) study of data from Sacramento, California, found that returning parolees increased crime within the communities to which they returned. Overall, this research stresses the idea of a "tipping point," whereby moderate levels of incarceration in a community can lower crime, but "after a certain tipping point, higher rates of people being removed from a neighborhood to go to prison and then returned seem to result in higher rates of crime" (Frost and Clear, 2013: 703).

Other research, however, has been less supportive of Clear's arguments, suggesting that incarceration does have both negative and positive effects (as suggested by the tipping point thesis) but that, on balance, it may reduce community crime rates (see Lynch and Sabol, 2004). Additional research will hopefully allow us to better determine the overall effects of incarceration. For now, however, it is clear that the consequences of incarceration are varied and that it does not result in the large reduction in crime that many originally claimed. It may further disadvantage black lives, in particular.

Finally, after steadily rising for four decades, prison populations stopped growing and started to fall around 2009 (Petersilia and Cullen, 2015). Writing with Natasha Frost, Clear (2020) has recognized that this development has implications for coercive mobility theory. In the end, however, they do not anticipate the effects of mass imprisonment on impoverished communities will be diminished. There are two key insights inform this assessment. First, the decline in the prison count over the past decade—from around 2.3 million to around 2.0 million (Kang-

Brown et al., 2021; Maruschak and Minton, 2020)—is occurring at an "exceedingly slow pace" (Clear and Frost, 2020: 191). The prison population growth curve has been reversed, but this hopeful sign should not mask the stubborn reality that mass imprisonment remains at a high level. Second, systemic change has not occurred in society or in the justice system—as the recent protests by Black Lives Matter and in the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd have revealed. Looking ahead, Clear and Frost (2020: 195, emphasis in the original) make the disquieting prediction that "disproportionate minority contact [with the justice system] will continue, disparate impacts will remain, and those most disadvantaged inner city communities will continue to experience the effects of *coercive mobility* for generations to come."

Perceived Discrimination

In a path-breaking book, James Unnever and Shaun Gabbidon (2011) present the first coherent "theory of African American offending" (see Chapter 31 in this part; for a recent alternative, see Burt, 2019). Although not denying general causes of crime, they create a perspective that takes seriously the different lived realities of blacks and whites in the United States. The key starting point for their theory is that based on personal and vicarious experiences, African Americans perceive that they live in a world that is rigged against them—that they live in a nation that tolerates gross racial inequities in the criminal justice system and that permits them to be treated, even if only occasionally, in a discriminatory fashion. These experiences and the resulting perceptions—what Unnever and Gabbidon call a "peerless worldview" (p. 27)—are unique to African Americans because they are the legacy of a nation that had a long history of legitimating the worst forms of racial oppression. In the post–Civil Rights era, much has changed for the better. Still, few blacks are free from some form of minor or major injustice in their lives. As Unnever and Gabbidon (2011: 27) contend, "nearly every African American believes that they will encounter racial prejudice and racial discrimination during their lives because they are black."

Based on the work of Ronald Simons, Eric Stewart, and others, there is now a mounting body of empirical evidence that perceived discrimination is associated with criminal offending, as well as with a range of mental and physical health problems (Agnew, 2006; Burt, 2019; Unnever et al., 2009). Unnever and Gabbidon admit that when such experiences are intense, they might well have a direct effect on crime (i.e., nearly everyone who experiences extreme injustice may lash out in some way). More often, however, some African Americans may cope with actual and perceived discrimination through crime whereas others (the majority) do not. What accounts for this differential coping? Here, Unnever and Gabbidon introduce the key concept of *racial socialization*.

Unlike their white counterparts, black parents have an extra—and crucial—parenting task: to teach their kids how to handle the personal devaluation and maltreatment that they inevitably will encounter at some point in their lives *because of their race*. Effective parents teach their youngsters to have a positive racial pride that fends off attempts to devalue them, prepare them for likely racial incidents (e.g., how to react when stopped by the police), caution them not to mistrust all whites (just the bad apples), and inculcate the belief that, in the end, hard work and character will lead to success. But some black parents either do not racially socialize their children or encourage mistrust of whites and the system their kids will have to negotiate.

According to Unnever and Gabbidon, ineffective racial socialization can have problematic consequences for African Americans. Such youths are likely to be more sensitive to racial affronts and to respond to perceived discrimination with anger and defiance. Given their mistrust, they are likely to form weak social bonds with conventional social institutions, such as the school. Instead, they are at risk of befriending members of the street culture and embracing this alternative worldview regarding the use of violence and predatory behavior. Put in the language of other

theories, those lacking the skills to cope prosocially with perceived discrimination are likely to face risk factors such as criminogenic strains and negative emotions, attenuated bonds, and the learning of criminal values. The end result is that they will be more likely to be involved in a life in crime.

A particular strength of Unnever and Gabbidon's (2011: 188) model is that it clearly identifies the causal connections between unique African American experiences and criminal conduct (see Figure 31.1 in Chapter 31). Accordingly, it offers the inviting possibility for scholars to test their theory of African American offending and to determine if it increases our ability to explain blacks' involvement in criminal behavior. Notably, there is beginning evidence in support of the theory (see, e.g., Unnever, 2014; Unnever et al., 2016).

Conclusion: Paying Attention to Race

Racial inequality in crime, victimization, and the use of the justice system remains a core theoretical and policy issue in the field of criminology. General theories of crime are invaluable, and certainly identify causal factors that affect criminal participation across social groups. Still, for too long, criminologists have not asked often enough why African Americans are exposed to these risk factors more than whites and how this relates to the role of race in the United States. Further, only small numbers of scholars have focused on what it means to be black in America and how this lived reality might create unique, race-specific social and emotional experiences that are criminogenic. The time has come, therefore, for criminologists to pay closer attention to race and, in so doing, enrich the field's ongoing theoretical enterprise.

References

Abt, Thomas. 2019. *Bleeding Out: The Devastating Consequences of Urban Violence—And a Bold New Plan for Peace in the Streets*. New York: Basic Books.

Agnew, Robert. 2006. *Pressured into Crime: An Overview of General Strain Theory*. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

Alexander, Michelle. 2011. "The New Jim Crow." *Ohio State Journal of Criminal Law* **9** (1): 7–26.

____. 2010. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press.

Anderson, Elijah. 1999. *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*. New York: W. W. Norton.

____. 1990. *Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Binnall, James M. 2021. *Twenty Million Angry Men: The Case for Including Convicted Felons in Our Jury System*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Blau, Judith R. and Peter M. Blau. 1982. "The Cost of Inequality: Metropolitan Structure and Violent Crime." *American Sociological Review* **47**: 114–128.

Bonta, James and D. A. Andrews. 2017. *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*, 6th edition. New York: Routledge.

Brezina, Timothy, Robert Agnew, Francis T. Cullen, and John Paul Wright. 2004. "Code of the Street: A Quantitative Assessment of Elijah Anderson's Subculture of Violence Thesis and Its Contribution to Youth Violence Research." *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice: An Interdisciplinary Journal* **2**: 303–328.

Burt, Callie H. 2019. "Racial Discrimination and Cultural Adaptations: An Evolutionary Developmental Approach." In James D. Unnever, Shaun L. Gabbidon, and Cecilia Chouhy (eds.), *Building a Black Criminology: Race, Theory, and Crime—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **24**, pp. 207–252. New York: Routledge.

Burton, Alexander L., Velmer S. Burton, Jr., Francis T. Cullen, Justin T. Pickett, Leah C. Butler, and Angela J. Thielo. 2020. "Beyond the New Jim Crow: Public Support for Removing and Regulating Collateral Consequences." *Federal Probation* **84** (3): 19–33.

Burton, Alexander L., Francis T. Cullen, Justin T. Pickett, Velmer S. Burton, Jr., and Angela J. Thielo. 2021. "Beyond the Eternal Criminal Record: Public Support for Expungement." *Criminology and Public Policy* **20**: 123–151.

Chan, Tim. 2020. "'White Fragility,' 'The New Jim Crow' Top Amazon Best Sellers List Following Week of Unrest." *Rolling Stone*, June 4. https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-news/books-race-sell-out-amazon-george-floyd-protest-1008220/

Clear, Todd R. 2007. *Imprisoning Communities: How Mass Incarceration Makes Disadvantaged Neighborhoods Worse*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Clear, Todd R. and Natasha A. Frost. 2020. "Coercive Mobility Theory in an Era of Declining Prison Populations." In Cecilia Chouhy, Joshua C. Cochran, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (eds.), *Criminal Justice Theory: Explanations and Effects—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **26**, pp. 187–197. New York: Routledge.

Clear, Todd R., Dina R. Rose, Elin Waring, and Kristin Scully. 2003. "Coercive Mobility and Crime: A Preliminary Examination of Concentrated Incarceration and Social Disorganization." *Justice Quarterly* **20**: 33–64.

Costello, Barbara J. 2013. "Hirschi's Criminology." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 131–142. New York: Oxford University Press.

Cullen, Francis T., Cecilia Chouhy, Leah Butler, and Heejin Lee. 2019. “Beyond White Criminology.” In James D. Unnever, Shaun L. Gabbidon, and Cecilia Chouhy (eds.), *Building a Black Criminology: Race, Theory, and Crime—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **24**, pp. 45–75. New York: Routledge.

Currie, Elliott. 1985. *Confronting Crime: An American Challenge*. New York: Pantheon.

____. 2020. *A Peculiar Indifference: The Neglected Toll of Violence on Black America*. New York: Metropolitan Books.

Du Bois, W. E. B. 1973 [1899]. *The Philadelphia Negro*. Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson Organization.

Enns, Peter K. 2016. *Incarceration Nation: How the United States Became the Most Punitive Democracy in the World*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Enns, Peter K., Youngmin Yi, Megan Comfort, Alyssa W. Goldman, Hedwig Lee, Christopher Muller, Sara Wakefield, Emily A. Wang, and Christopher Wildeman. 2019. “What Percentage of Americans Have Ever Had a Family Member Incarcerated?: Evidence from the Family History of Incarceration Survey (FamHIS).” *Socius* **5**: 1–45.

Fader, Jamie. 2021. “‘I Don’t Have Time for Drama’: Managing Risk and Uncertainty Through Network Avoidance.” *Criminology* **59**: 291–317.

Feagin, Joe R. and Melvin P. Sikes. 1994. *Living with Racism: The Black Middle-Class Experience*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Federal Bureau of Investigation. 2020. *Crime in the United States 2019*. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/topic-pages/persons-arrested

Frost, Natasha A. and Todd R. Clear. 2013. “Coercive Mobility.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 691–708. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gottfredson, Michael R. and Travis Hirschi. 1990. *A General Theory of Crime*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Graham, Amanda, Murat Haner, Melissa M. Sloan, Francis T. Cullen, Teresa C. Kulig, and Cheryl Lero Jonson. 2020. “Race and Worrying About Police Brutality: The Hidden Injuries of Minority Status in America.” *Victims and Offenders* **5**: 549–573.

Greene, Helen Taylor and Shaun L. Gabbidon. 2000. *African American Criminological Thought*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Hagan, John, Carla Shedd, and Monique R. Payne. 2005. “Race, Ethnicity, and Youth Perceptions of Criminal Injustice.” *American Sociological Review* **70**: 381–407.

Hannerz, Ulf. 1969. *Soulside: Inquiries into Ghetto Culture and Community*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Harer, Miles D. and Darrell Steffensmeier. 1992. “The Differing Effects of Economic Inequality on Black and White Rates of Violence.” *Social Forces* **70**: 1035–1054.

Henderson, Martha L., Francis T. Cullen, Liqun Cao, Sandra Lee Browning, and Renee Kopache. 1997. “The Impact of Race on Perceptions of Criminal Injustice.” *Journal of Criminal Justice* **25**: 447–462.

Hipp, John R. 2007. “Income Inequality, Race, and Place: Does the Distribution of Race and Class Within Neighborhoods Affect Crime Rates?” *Criminology* **45**: 665–697.

Hipp, John R. and Daniel K. Yates. 2009. “Do Returning Parolees Affect Neighborhood Crime? A Case Study of Sacramento.” *Criminology* **47**: 619–656.

Hirschi, Travis. 1969. *Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Horton, Jake. 2021. “US Crime: Is America Seeing a Surge in Violence?” *BBC News*, July 7. https://www.bbc.com/news/57581270

Jacobs, James B. 2015. *The Eternal Criminal Record*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

James, Nathan. 2018. *Recent Violent Crime Trends in the United States*. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service.

Kang-Brown, Jacob, Chase Montagnet, and Jasmine Heiss. 2021. *People in Jail and Prison in 2020*. Brooklyn, New York: Vera Institute of Justice.

Krivo, Lauren J. and Ruth D. Peterson. 1996. “Extremely Disadvantaged Neighborhoods and Urban Crime.” *Social Forces* **75**: 619–650.

Kubrin, Charis E. and Ronald Weitzer. 2003. “Retaliatory Homicide: Concentrated Disadvantage and Neighborhood Culture.” *Social Problems* **50**: 157–180.

Lee, Matthew R. 2010. “Blau, Judith R., and Peter M. Blau: Inequality and Crime.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*, pp. 96–97. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lynch, James P. and William Sabol. 2004. “Assessing the Effects of Mass Incarceration on Informal Social Control in Communities.” *Criminology and Public Policy* **3**: 267–294.

Manza, Jeff and Christopher Uggen. 2006. *Locked Out: Felon Disenfranchisement and American Democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Maruschak, Laura M. and Todd D. Minton. 2020. *Correctional Populations in the United States, 2017–2018*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice.

Miller, Jody. 2008. *Getting Played: African American Girls’ Urban Inequality and Gendered Violence*. New York: New York University Press.

Nellis, Ashley. 2021. *No End in Sight: America’s Enduring Reliance on Life Imprisonment*. Washington, DC: The Sentencing Project.

Ousey, Graham C. and Matthew R. Lee. 2013. “Community, Inequality, and Crime.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 352–369. New York: Oxford University Press.

Pager, Devah. 2007. *Marked: Race, Crime, and Finding Work in an Era of Mass Incarceration*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Petersilia, Joan and Francis T. Cullen. 2015. “Liberal But Not Stupid: Meeting the Promise of Downsizing Prisons.” *Stanford Journal of Criminal Law and Policy* **2**: 1–43.

Peterson, Ruth D. and Lauren J. Krivo. 2010. *Divergent Social Worlds: Neighborhood Crime and the Racial-Spatial Divide*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Peterson, Ruth D., Lauren J. Krivo, and Christopher R. Browning. 2006. “Segregation and Race/Ethnic Inequality in Crime: New Directions.” In Francis T. Cullen, John Paul Wright, and Kristie R. Blevins (eds.), *Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory—Advances in Criminological Theory,* Volume **15**, pp. 169–187. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Pew Center on the States. 2009. *One in 31: The Long Reach of American Corrections*. Washington, DC: Pew Charitable Trusts.

Pew Charitable Trusts. 2008. *One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008*. Washington, DC: Pew Charitable Trusts.

Pew Research Center. 2016. *On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites Are Worlds Apart*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.

Pickett, Justin T. 2019. “Public Opinion and Criminal Justice Policy: Theory and Research.” *Annual Review of Criminology* **2**: 405–428.

Pickett, Justin T., Amanda Graham, and Francis T. Cullen. 2021. “The American Racial Divide in Fear of the Police.” Unpublished paper, University at Albany.

Rose, Dina R. and Todd R. Clear. 1998. “Incarceration, Social Capital, and Crime: Implications for Social Disorganization Theory.” *Criminology* **36**: 441–479.

Sampson, Robert J. 1985. “Race and Criminal Violence: A Demographically Disaggregated Analysis of Urban Homicide.” *Crime and Delinquency* **31**: 47–82.

Sampson, Robert J. and Dawn Jeglum Bartusch. 1998. “Legal Cynicism and (Subcultural?) Tolerance of Deviance: The Neighborhood Context of Racial Differences.” *Law and Society Review* **32**: 777–804.

Sampson, Robert J. and Lydia Bean. 2006. “Cultural Mechanisms and Killing Fields: A Revised Theory of Community-Level Racial Inequality.” In Ruth D. Peterson, Lauren J. Krivo, and John Hagan (eds.), *The Many Colors of Crime*, pp. 8–36. New York: New York University Press.

Sampson, Robert J. and William Julius Wilson. 1995. “Toward a Theory of Race, Crime and Urban Inequality.” In John Hagan and Ruth D. Peterson (eds.), *Crime and Inequality*, pp. 37–54. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Sampson, Robert J., William Julius Wilson, and Hanna Katz. 2018. “Reassessing ‘Toward a Theory of Race, Crime, and Urban Inequality’: Enduring and New Challenges in 21st Century America.” *Du Bois Review* **15**: 13–34.

Sharkey, Patrick. 2018. *Uneasy Peace: The Great Crime Decline, the Renewal of City Life, and the Next War on Violence*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Shihadeh, Edward S. and Nicole Flynn. 1996. “Segregation and Crime: The Effect of Black Social Isolation on the Rates of Urban Black Violence.” *Social Forces* **74**: 1325–1352.

Sniderman, Paul M. and Thomas Piazza. 1993. *The Scar of Race*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.

Stewart, Eric. A., Christopher J. Schreck, and Ronald L. Simons. 2006. “‘I Ain’t Gonna Let No One Disrespect Me’: Does the Code of the Street Reduce or Increase Violent Victimization Among African American Adolescents?” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **43**: 427–458.

Stewart, Eric A. and Ronald L. Simons. 2006. “Structure and Culture in African American Adolescent Violence: A Partial Test of the ‘Code of the Street’ Thesis.” *Justice Quarterly* **23**: 1–33.

____. 2010. “Race, Code of the Street, and Violent Delinquency: A Multilevel Investigation of Neighborhood Street Culture and Individual Norms of Violence.” *Criminology* **48**: 569–605.

Stewart, Eric A., Ronald L. Simons, and Rand D. Conger. 2002. “Assessing Neighborhood and Social Psychological Influences on Childhood Violence in an African American Sample.” *Criminology* **40**: 801–830.

Suttles, Gerald. D. 1968. *The Social Order of the Slum: Ethnicity and Territory in the Inner City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tonry, Michael. 2011. *Punishing Race: A Continuing American Dilemma*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Unnever, James D. 2014. “A Theory of African American Offending: A Test of Core Propositions.” *Race and Justice* **4**: 98–123.

Unnever, James D., Francis T. Cullen, and J. C. Barnes. 2016. “Racial Discrimination, Weakened School Bonds, and Problematic Behaviors: Testing a Theory of African American Offending.” *Journal of Research in Crime Delinquency* **53**: 139–164.

Unnever, James D., Francis T. Cullen, Scott A. Mathers, Timothy E. McClure, and Marisa C. Allison. 2009. “Racial Discrimination and Hirschi’s Criminological Classic: A Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge.” *Justice Quarterly* **26**: 377–409.

Unnever, James D., and Shaun L. Gabbidon. 2011. *A Theory of African American Offending: Race, Racism, and Crime*. New York: Routledge.

Unnever, James D., Shaun L. Gabbidon, and Cecilia Chouhy, eds. 2019. *Building a Black Criminology: Race, Theory, and Crime—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **24**. New York: Routledge.

Unnever, James D. and Akwasi Owusu-Bempah. 2019. “A Black Criminology Matters.” In James D. Unnever, Shaun L. Gabbidon, and Cecilia Chouhy (eds.), *Building a Black Criminology: Race, Theory, and Crime—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **24**, pp. 3–28. New York: Routledge.

Vose, Brenda A., Francis T. Cullen, and Heejin Lee. 2020. “Targeted Release in the COVID-19 Correctional Crisis: Using the RNR Model to Save Lives.” *American Journal of Criminal Justice* **45**: 769–779.

Warner, Barbara D. 2003. “The Role of Attenuated Culture in Social Disorganization Theory.” *Criminology* **41**: 73–97.

Weisburd, David, Elizabeth R. Groff, and Sue-Ming Yang. 2012. *The Criminology of Place: Street Segments and Our Understanding of the Crime Problem*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wilkerson, Isabel. 2020. *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*. New York: Random House.

Wilson, William Julius. 1987. *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

____. 1996. *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*. New York: Vintage.

Zimring, Franklin E. 2012. *The City That Became Safe: New York’s Lessons for Urban Crime and Its Control*. New York: Oxford University Press.

28.
A Theory of Race, Crime, and Urban Inequality*

Robert J. Sampson

William Julius Wilson

Conservative commentators on public policy are fond of attributing crime in the inner cities to the faulty culture of community residents. "If youths only had good values, respected the law, dressed the right way, and saw the value of schooling," so the argument goes, "they would stay out of trouble, get good jobs, and achieve the American Dream."

Many criminologists reject such thinking not only because it is simplistic, but also because it conveniently ignores the harsh lives that inner-city people face—from birth through adulthood. If culture is to blame, then there is no need to pay attention to the potential "root causes" of lawlessness—conditions such as poverty, inadequate health care, disrupted families, schools in shambles, and the depletion of economic opportunity as jobs move to the suburbs and to other nations. The focus on culture also masks the fact that many of these harsh conditions do not simply emerge naturally but are the result of political choices by elected officials who do little or nothing about them. In short, scholars see attributing crime to "bad-culture" as dangerous because it obscures the role of "bad structures" in causing criminal behavior.

Although the position of structural criminologists is understandable, Sampson and Wilson suggest that ignoring the prevailing culture in urban areas results in an incomplete understanding of why crime takes place. They see culture not as the simple internalization of antisocial values but as the acquisition of "cognitive landscapes." Consider the case of violence. Inner-city residents do not espouse "hurting others" as a cherished value. But what if children grow up in a community in which they witness bullet-ridden bodies lying in public spaces or perhaps see older youths brandishing weapons? In this context, using lethal violence enters the mind as a potential choice to be made and, in some circumstances, as an unavoidable thing to do (such as when one's honor is challenged). In neighborhoods bereft of such experiences, however, youths are unlikely even to consider pulling out a gun as a realistic option to settle disputes. Such extreme violence is not seen, cannot be modeled, and just is not part of their "cognitive landscape"; it is virtually "inconceivable." When it does occur, the violence is so shocking and so unexpected that it becomes newsworthy and is plastered all over the evening news.

Sampson and Wilson understand, however, that a purely cultural explanation of inner-city crime and violence has limited merit. Identifying the content of cultures that generate crime is an important task. But a complete explanation of criminal conduct must explain what initially causes and then sustains the influence of criminogenic cultures.

In a somewhat complex analysis, Sampson and Wilson single out a critical factor that underlies the crime-inducing cognitive landscapes that flourish in inner cities: social isolation or, in their words, "the lack of contact or of sustained interaction with individuals and institutions that represent mainstream society." They observe that a peculiar reality of American society is the extreme racial segregation of African Americans residing in many major

cities (see also Massey and Denton, 1993; Peterson et al., 2006). In disadvantaged urban communities, youths live in segregated housing, attend schools in which virtually every student is a minority, and rarely travel outside the boundaries of their immediate neighborhood. These youths are cut off from the kind of daily routines that kids in more affluent areas witness, take for granted, and implicitly learn from. In many well-to-do suburbs, for example, youngsters see parents go off to nice jobs each day, the children are exposed to an array of enriching cultural experiences (including "taking lessons"), they "summer" at the country club and the beach house, they know that their friends are all going to college, and so on. The American Dream is not really a "dream" but a cognitive expectation. This is not the case for many inner-city youths whose landscape is devoid of daily examples of how to participate in and profit from such conventional social roles (Sampson and Bean, 2006).

Notably, Sampson and Wilson do not view this social isolation as a "bad choice" made by inner-city residents but rather as the result of persisting racial inequality. Racial inequality is the product both of conscious political decisions—such as permitting racial discrimination in home purchases and "ghettoizing" minorities in high-rise public housing erected in geographically isolated areas—and of broad macro-sociological changes, such as the massive movement of jobs out of the inner city. In the end, these structural forces have isolated minorities in neighborhoods marked by extreme poverty and social disorganization, and they have effectively cut off residents from mainstream American society. In this structural context, cultural values or "cognitive landscapes" conducive to crime emerge and are only weakly rivaled by alternative ways of understanding the broader social world and the possibilities it holds (Wilson, 2009).

One final issue is how the insights of this classic article authored more than a quarter century ago pertain to the American city of today. Along with Hanna Katz, Sampson and Wilson have taken up this issue (Sampson et al., 2018). Key changes to cities have included the decline in crime and the incoming of immigrants. In a review of the relevant empirical literature, Sampson et al. conclude that consistent support exists for the theory's continued relevance as an explanation of variation in crime across communities.

References

Massey, Douglas S. and Nancy A. Denton. 1993. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Peterson, Ruth D., Lauren J. Krivo, and Christopher R. Browning. 2006. "Segregation and Race/Ethnic Inequality in Crime: New Directions." In Francis T. Cullen, John Paul Wright, and Kristie R. Blevins (eds.), *Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **15**, pp. 169–187. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Sampson, Robert J. and Lydia Bean. 2006. "Cultural Mechanisms and Killing Fields: A Revised Theory of Community-Level Racial Inequality." In Ruth D. Peterson, Lauren J. Krivo, and John Hagan (eds.), *The Many Colors of Crime*, pp. 8–36. New York: New York University Press.

Sampson, Robert J., William Julius Wilson, and Hanna Katz. 2018. "Reassessing 'Toward a Theory, Crime, and Urban Inequality': Enduring and New Challenges in 21st Century America." *Du Bois Review* **15**: 13–34.

Wilson, William Julius, 2009. *More Than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Our purpose in this chapter is to address one of the central yet difficult issues facing criminology—race and violent crime….

[W]e advance in this chapter a theoretical strategy that incorporates both structural and cultural arguments regarding race, crime, and inequality in American cities. In contrast to psychologically based relative deprivation

theories and the subculture of violence, we view the race and crime linkage from contextual lenses that highlight the very different ecological contexts that blacks and whites reside in—regardless of individual characteristics. The basic thesis is that macro-social patterns of residential inequality give rise to the social isolation and ecological concentration of the truly disadvantaged, which in turn leads to structural barriers and cultural adaptations that undermine social organizations and hence the control of crime. This thesis is grounded in what is actually an old idea in criminology that has been overlooked in the race and crime debate—the importance of communities.

---

* Excerpted from Robert J. Sampson and William Julius Wilson, "Toward a Theory of Race, Crime, and Urban Inequality," in *Crime and Inequality,* edited by John Hagan and Ruth D. Peterson. Copyright © 1995 by the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University. With the permission of Stanford University Press, www.sup.org.

The Community Structure of Race and Crime

Unlike the dominant tradition in criminology that seeks to distinguish offenders from nonoffenders, the macrosocial or community level of explanation asks what it is about community structures and cultures that produces differential rates of crime (Bursik, 1988; Byrne and Sampson, 1986; Short, 1985). As such, the goal of macro-level research is not to explain individual involvement in criminal behavior but to isolate characteristics of communities, cities, or even societies that lead to high rates of criminality (Byrne and Sampson, 1986; Short, 1985)....

The Ecological Concentration of Race and Social Dislocations

Having demonstrated the similarity of black-white variations by ecological context, we turn to the second logical question. To what extent are blacks as a group differentially exposed to criminogenic structural conditions? ...

The combination of urban poverty and family disruption concentrated by race is particularly severe.... In not one city over 100,000 in the United States do blacks live in ecological equality with whites when it comes to these basic features of economic and family organization. Accordingly, racial differences in poverty and family disruption are so strong that the "worst" urban contexts in which whites reside are considerably better than the average context of black communities (Sampson, 1987: 354).

Taken as a whole, these patterns underscore what W. J. Wilson (1987) has labeled "concentration effects," that is, the effects of living in a neighborhood that is overwhelmingly impoverished. These concentration effects, reflected in a range of outcomes from degree of labor force attachment to social deviance, are created by the constraints and opportunities that the residents of inner-city neighborhoods face in terms of access to jobs and job networks, involvement in quality schools, availability of marriageable partners, and exposure to conventional role models.

The social transformation of the inner city in recent decades has resulted in an increased concentration of the most disadvantaged segments of the urban black population—especially poor, female-headed families with children. Whereas one of every five poor blacks resided in ghetto or extreme poverty areas in 1970, by 1980 nearly two out of every five did so (W. J. Wilson et al., 1988: 131). This change has been fueled by several macrostructural forces. In particular, urban minorities have been vulnerable to structural economic changes related to the deindustrialization of central cities (e.g., the shift from goods-producing to service-producing industries; increasing polarization of the labor market into low-wage and high-wage sectors; and relocation of manufacturing out of the inner city). The exodus of middle- and upper-income black families from the inner city has also removed an important social buffer that could potentially deflect the full impact of prolonged joblessness and industrial transformation. This thesis is based on the assumption that the basic institutions of an area (churches, schools, stores, recreational facilities, etc.) are more likely to remain viable if the core of their support comes from more economically stable families in inner-city neighborhoods (W. J. Wilson, 1987: 56). The social milieu of increasing stratification among blacks differs significantly from the environment that existed in inner cities in previous decades (see also Hagedorn, 1988)....

In short, the foregoing discussion suggests that macrostructural factors—both historic and contemporary—have combined to concentrate urban black poverty and family disruption in the inner city. These factors include but are not limited to racial segregation, structural economic transformation and black male joblessness, class-linked out-migration from the inner city, and housing discrimination. It is important to emphasize that when segregation and concentrated poverty represent structural constraints embodied in public policy and historical patterns of racial subjugation, notions that individual differences (or self-selection) explain community-level effects on violence are considerably weakened (see Sampson and Lauritsen, 1994)....

The consequences of these differential ecological distributions by race raise the substantively plausible hypothesis that correlations of race and crime may be systematically confounded with important differences in community contexts....

More specifically, we posit that the most important determinant of the relationship between race and crime is the differential distribution of blacks in communities characterized by (1) *structural social disorganization* and (2)

cultural social isolation, both of which stem from the concentration of poverty, family disruption, and residential instability....

The Structure of Social (Dis)organization

In their original formulation Shaw and McKay held that low economic status, ethnic heterogeneity, and residential mobility led to the disruption of community social organization, which in turn accounted for variations in crime and delinquency rates (1942; 1969). As recently extended by Kornhauser (1978), Bursik (1988), and Sampson and Groves (1989), the concept of social disorganization may be seen as the inability of a community structure to realize the common values of its residents and maintain effective social controls. The *structural* dimensions of community social disorganization refer to the prevalence and interdependence of social networks in a community—both informal (e.g., the density of acquaintanceship; intergenerational kinship ties; level of anonymity) and formal (e.g., organizational participation; institutional stability)—and in the span of collective supervision that the community directs toward local problems.

This social-disorganization approach is grounded in what Kasarda and Janowitz (1974: 329) call the "systemic" model, where the local community is viewed as a complex system of friendship and kinship networks, and formal and informal associational ties are rooted in family life and ongoing socialization processes (see also Sampson, 1991). From this view social organization and social *dis*organization are seen as different ends of the same continuum of systemic networks of community social control. As Bursik (1988) notes, when formulated in this way, social disorganization is clearly separable not only from the processes that may lead to it (e.g., poverty, residential mobility), but also from the degree of criminal behavior that may be a result. This conceptualization also goes beyond the traditional account of community as a strictly geographical or spatial phenomenon by focusing on the social and organizational networks of local residents (see Leighton, 1988).

Evidence favoring social-disorganization theory is available with respect both to its structural antecedents and to mediating processes....

Boiled down to its essentials, then, our theoretical framework linking social-disorganization theory with research on urban poverty and political economy suggests that macrosocial forces (e.g., segregation, migration, housing discrimination, structural transformation of the economy) interact with local community-level factors (e.g., residential turnover, concentrated poverty, family disruption) to impede social organization. This is a distinctly sociological viewpoint, for it focuses attention on the proximate structural characteristics and mediating processes of community social organization that help explain crime, while also recognizing the larger historical, social, and political forces shaping local communities.

Social Isolation and Community Culture

Although social-disorganization theory is primarily structural in nature, it also focuses on how the ecological segregation of communities gives rise to what Kornhauser (1978: 75) terms *cultural* disorganization—the attenuation of societal cultural values. Poverty, heterogeneity, anonymity, mutual distrust, institutional instability, and other structural features of urban communities are hypothesized to impede communication and obstruct the quest for common values, thereby fostering cultural diversity with respect to nondelinquent values. For example, an important component of Shaw and McKay's theory was that disorganized communities spawned delinquent gangs with their own subcultures and norms perpetuated through cultural transmission.

Despite their relative infrequency, ethnographic studies generally support the notion that structurally disorganized communities are conducive to the emergence of cultural value systems and attitudes that seem to legitimate, or at least provide a basis of tolerance for, crime and deviance....

[C]ommunity contexts seem to shape what can be termed *cognitive landscapes* or ecologically structured norms (e.g., normative ecologies) regarding appropriate standards and expectations of conduct. That is, in structurally disorganized slum communities it appears that a system of values emerges in which crime, disorder, and drug use are less than fervently condemned and hence expected as part of everyday life. These ecologically structured social perceptions and tolerances in turn appear to influence the probability of criminal outcomes and harmful deviant behavior (e.g., drug use by pregnant women)....

A renewed appreciation for the role of cultural adaptations is congruent with the notion of *social isolation*—defined as the lack of contact or of sustained interaction with individuals and institutions that represent mainstream society (W. J. Wilson, 1987: 60). According to this line of reasoning, the social isolation fostered by the ecological concentration of urban poverty deprives residents not only of resources and conventional role models, but also of cultural learning from mainstream social networks that facilitate social and economic advancement in modern industrial society (W. J. Wilson, 1991). Social isolation is specifically distinguished from the culture of poverty by virtue of its focus on adaptations to constraints and opportunities rather than internalization of norms.

As Ulf Hannerz noted in his seminal work *Soulside*, it is thus possible to recognize the importance of macrostructural constraints—that is, avoid the extreme notions of the culture of poverty or culture of violence, and yet see the "merits of a more subtle kind of cultural analysis" (1969: 182). One could hypothesize a difference, on the one hand, between a jobless family whose mobility is impeded by the macrostructural constraints in the economy and the larger society but nonetheless lives in an area with a relatively low rate of poverty, and on the other hand, a jobless family that lives in an inner-city ghetto neighborhood that is influenced not only by these same constraints but also by the behavior of other jobless families in the neighborhood (Hannerz, 1969: 184; W. J. Wilson, 1991). The latter influence is one of culture—the extent to which individuals follow their inclinations as they have been developed by learning or influence from other members of the community (Hannerz, 1969).

Ghetto-specific practices such as an overt emphasis on sexuality and macho values, idleness, and public drinking are often denounced by those who reside in inner-city ghetto neighborhoods. But because such practices occur much more frequently there than in middle-class society, largely because of social organizational forces, the transmission of these modes of behavior by precept, as in role modeling, is more easily facilitated (Hannerz, 1969). For example, youngsters are more likely to see violence as a way of life in inner-city ghetto neighborhoods. They are more likely to

witness violent acts, to be taught to be violent by exhortation, and to have role models who do not adequately control their own violent impulses or restrain their own anger. Accordingly, given the availability of and easy access to firearms, knives, and other weapons, adolescent experiments with macho behavior often have deadly consequences (Prothrow-Stith, 1991).

The concept of social isolation captures this process by implying that contact between groups of different class and/or racial backgrounds either is lacking or has become increasingly intermittent, and that the nature of this contact enhances effects of living in a highly concentrated poverty area. Unlike the concept of the culture of violence, then, social isolation does not mean that ghetto-specific practices become internalized, take on a life of their own, and therefore continue to influence behavior no matter what the contextual environment. Rather, it suggests that reducing structural inequality would not only decrease the frequency of these practices; it would also make their transmission by precept less efficient. So in this sense we advocate a renewed appreciation for the ecology of culture, but not the monolithic and hence noncontextual culture implied by the subculture of poverty and violence.

Discussion

Rejecting both the "individualistic" and "materialist" fallacies, we have attempted to delineate a theoretical strategy that incorporates both structural and cultural arguments regarding race, crime, and urban inequality in American cities. Drawing on insights from social-disorganization theory and recent research on urban poverty, we believe this strategy provides new ways of thinking about race and crime. First and foremost, our perspective views the link between race and crime through contextual lenses that highlight the very different ecological contexts in which blacks and whites reside—regardless of individual characteristics. Second, we emphasize that crime rates among blacks nonetheless vary by ecological characteristics, just as they do for whites. Taken together, these facts suggest a powerful role for community context in explaining race and crime.

Our community-level explanation also departs from conventional wisdom. Rather than attributing to acts of crime a purely economic motive springing from relative deprivation—an individual-level psychological concept—we focus on the mediating dimensions of community social organization to understand variations in crime across areas. Moreover, we acknowledge and try to specify the macrosocial forces that contribute to the social organization of local communities. Implicit in this attempt is the incorporation of the political economy of place and the role of urban inequality in generating racial differences in community structure. As Wacquant observes, American urban poverty is "preeminently a *racial poverty* … rooted in the *ghetto* as a historically specific social form and mechanism of racial domination" (1991: 36, emphasis in original). This intersection of race, place, and poverty goes to the heart of our theoretical concern with societal and community organization.

Furthermore, we incorporate culture into our theory in the form of social isolation and ecological landscapes that shape perceptions and cultural patterns of learning. This culture is not seen as inevitably tied to race, but more to the varying structural contexts produced by residential and macroeconomic change, concentrated poverty, family instability, and intervening patterns of social disorganization. Perhaps controversially, then, we differ from the recent wave of structuralist research on the culture of violence (for a review see Sampson and Lauritsen 1994). In an interesting methodological sleight of hand, scholars have dismissed the relevance of culture based on the analysis of census data that provide no measures of culture whatsoever (see especially Blau and Blau 1982). We believe structural criminologists have too quickly dismissed the role of values, norms, and learning as they interact with concentrated poverty and social isolation. In our view, macrosocial patterns of residential inequality give rise to the social isolation and concentration of the truly disadvantaged, engendering cultural adaptations that undermine social organization.

Finally, our conceptualization suggests that the roots of urban violence among today's 15- to 21-year-old cohort may stem from childhood socialization that took place in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Consider that this cohort was born between 1970 and 1976 and spent its childhood in the context of a rapidly changing urban environment unlike that of any previous point in U.S. history. As documented in detail by W. J. Wilson (1987), the concentration of urban poverty and other social dislocations began increasing sharply in about 1970 and continued unabated through the decade and into the 1980s. As but one example, the proportion of black families headed by women increased by over 50% from 1970 to 1984 alone (W. J. Wilson 1987: 26). Large increases were also seen in the ecological concentration of ghetto poverty, racial segregation, population turnover, and joblessness. These social dislocations were, by comparison, relatively stable in earlier decades. Therefore, the logic of our theoretical model suggests that the profound changes in the urban structure of minority communities in the 1970s may hold the key to understanding recent increases in violence….

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is a "cognitive landscape"? How might such a landscape make crime more likely in some neighborhoods and less likely in other neighborhoods?
2. What do Sampson and Wilson mean by the concept of "social isolation"? Describe what life might be like in an isolated inner-city neighborhood. How would it differ from or be similar to your life growing up? Your life now?
3. Can you see any dangers in "blaming" individuals who live in inner cities for their own problems, including crime? When you consider the broader social context that is implicated in the "choice" of crime, why might focusing exclusively on "bad individuals" seem to be a limited way of understanding the causes of crime in inner cities? That is, do communities matter in the causation of criminal behavior?
4. Let's say that you are attending an American Society of Criminology meeting, and Sampson and Wilson are giving an address on their theory of crime. After their talk, they ask if there are any questions. You rise and ask, "Well, in light of your theory, what three policies or interventions might be undertaken to help solve crime in inner-city neighborhoods?" What do you think their answer would be?

29.
Imprisoning Communities: Coerced Mobility Theory*

Todd R. Clear

It seems reasonable to suppose that imprisoning offenders would reduce crime and that communities with the highest proportion of imprisoned offenders would experience the largest reductions in crime. Conservative criminologists and policymakers have made this claim. DiIulio (1994: 15), for example, stated that "no group of Americans would stand to benefit more from policies that keep convicted felons, adults and juveniles, behind bars for all or most of their terms than crime-plagued inner-city Americans and their children." In the selection below, however, Todd Clear makes the opposite argument.

Clear contends that the very high rates of incarceration that characterize many disadvantaged, largely African American communities increase the crime in those communities. Clear does not deny that incapacitating offenders stops some crime, although he claims that the incapacitation effect is small. He argues, however, that very high rates of incarceration increase community crime rates for several reasons—and this increase outweighs the reduction in crime that results from incapacitation.

Clear notes that in some highly impoverished communities, as many as one-fifth of all adult men are incarcerated on any given day. This is said to disrupt families. For example, it leads to more single-parent families, it reduces parental supervision, and it removes parental role models. The high rate of incarceration also creates economic problems; there are fewer employed residents in the community, both because many people are incarcerated and because those with prison records have trouble finding decent employment upon their release. Also, the money spent on prisons means there is less money to invest in local communities, including money for schools and jobs. Finally, the high rate of incarceration reduces both respect for the legal system and levels of political participation. Many residents, in fact, are unable even to vote because of their criminal records.

All of these effects reduce levels of control. Parents are less able to effectively supervise their children, teach them that crime is wrong, and instill self-control. Likewise, adults in the community are less able and/or willing to exercise control over one another. If the adults are not imprisoned, they are struggling with economic problems, have little "stake in conformity" or investment in conventional society, and are weakly attached to or even hostile toward the legal system. Further, they are unable to secure resources from the larger community, such as money for better schools. High rates of incarceration, in short, are a major source of social disorganization in the community (see Part II).

Clear (2007) presents much evidence in support of these arguments in his book Imprisoning Communities, *although not all evidence is supportive. Most notably, studies on the overall effect of incarceration on community crime rates have produced mixed results (see Clear, 2007;Lynch and Sabol, 2004). Some studies indicate that high rates of incarceration increase community crime rates, while other studies find the opposite. These mixed results reflect the fact that it is very difficult to accurately estimate the effect of incarceration on community crime rates. One must take account of the fact that community crime rates may affect incarceration rates and that both incarceration rates and community crime rates may be influenced by the same third variables, such as poverty*

(see the discussion in Clear, 2007: 166–174). These things are not easily done. Nevertheless, Clear gives us good reason to question what to many is a straightforward proposition: if you lock up a lot of offenders from a community, that community will experience a reduction in crime.

Clear concludes his selection with some policy recommendations. He describes how we might reduce the incarceration rate and thereby reduce the negative effects of high incarceration rates on communities. As an alternative to incarceration, he recommends a form of "community justice" that is quite similar to the restorative justice approach advocated by Braithwaite and others (see Part VI and Chapter 19). Community justice, however, also involves efforts to strengthen the ability of families and neighborhood groups to exercise effective control. For example, it involves efforts to improve local school systems.

An important development could impact the effects of coerced mobility: for the past decade or so, prison populations have stopped growing and have declined from around 2.3 million to around 2 million. Although these developments are encouraging, Clear does not believe that they will reverse the negative effects of mass incarceration on inner-city neighborhoods. Two reasons underlie this assessment. First, the decline in prisoners has been slow, small, and inconsistent across states. Mass incarceration has not worsened, but it remains the elephant in the correctional room. Second, given the racial disparities baked into the criminal justice system, the effect of incarceration will still be experienced most deeply by impoverished communities (see Clear and Frost, 2020). Still, should long-term decreases in imprisonment be sustained and be buttressed by other community reforms, the possibility of reversing the criminogenic effects of coerced mobility could be possible.

References

Clear, Todd R. 2007. *Imprisoning Communities: How Mass Incarceration Makes Disadvantaged Neighborhoods Worse*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Clear, Todd R. and Natasha A. Frost. 2020. "Coercive Mobility Theory in an Era of Declining Prison Populations." In Cecilia Chouhy, Joshua C. Cochran, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (eds.), *Criminal Justice Theory: Explanations and Effects—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **26**, pp. 187–197. New York: Routledge.

DiIulio, John J., Jr. 1994. "The Question of Black Crime." *Public Interest* **117** (Fall): 3–32.

Lynch, James P. and William J. Sabol. 2004. "Assessing the Effects of Mass Incarceration on Informal Social Control in Communities." *Criminology and Public Policy* **3**: 267–294.

Prison populations have grown mostly through society's locking up ever-increasing numbers of young men, especially black men, largely from impoverished places. The concentration of imprisonment of young men from disadvantaged places has grown to such a point that it is now a bedrock experience, a force that affects families and children, institutions and businesses, social groups and interpersonal relations. With its isolation of people from poor places, incarceration does more damage than good, including increases in crime. In this way, incarceration has become part of its own dynamic. Imprisonment has grown to the point that it now produces the very social problems on which it feeds. It is the perfect storm.

Uninformed public sentiments and practiced political interests have created a malignant foundation for our crime-prevention policy. Legislative changes lean only in the direction of ever-growing punitiveness, drawing more and more young people—especially black men—into the system's clutches. The system clutches them; indeed, people who get caught up in the penal system stay there longer, are subjected to more controls, and suffer a greater chance of failure than ever before in history. Faced with this situation, policy makers think only of becoming more strict and more punitive, more damaging, for an ever wider range of misbehaviors, drawing into the storm an ever larger group. As that group grows, the ripple effects of the damage also grow, crossing the social networks of those poorer

communities and extending into future generations. Crime goes up, crime goes down; yet in a weirdly disconnected fashion, prison populations increase regardless....

This chapter makes four central points:

- The extraordinary growth in the U.S. prison system, sustained for over 30 years, has had, at best, a small impact on crime.
- The growth in imprisonment has been concentrated among poor, minority males who live in impoverished neighborhoods.
- Concentrated incarceration in those impoverished communities has broken families, weakened the social-control capacity of parents, eroded economic strength, soured attitudes toward society, and distorted politics; even, after reaching a certain level, it has increased rather than decreased crime.
- Any attempt to overcome the problems of crime will have to encompass a combination of sentencing reforms and philosophical realignment.

---

* Reprinted from Todd R. Clear, *Imprisoning Communities: How Mass Incarceration Makes Disadvantaged Neighborhoods Worse*. Copyright © 2007 by Oxford University Press; reprinted by permission.

Incarceration and Crime

As a general rule, Americans believe that sending people to prison, especially men, prevents crime. This belief in the crime-prevention power of prison has a good dose of apparent face validity. After all, men behind prison walls cannot commit crimes against society. As a kind of proof, there is the all-too-common news story of a violent crime committed by a person recently released from prison. It seems an unassailable fact that at least *this* crime could have been prevented had the person never been allowed to get out. And if we can just make the prison experience *tough* enough, then surely people will think twice about committing the crimes that put them at risk of going there....

In fact, however, the scientific evidence about the relationship between incarceration and crime is by no means uniformly supportive of the prison's capacity to reduce crime. The face validity of incapacitation—if you lock up a person who is actively committing crimes, you prevent the further crimes he would have committed—begins to evaporate upon close inspection. Many crimes still occur, because the person who is now behind bars is replaced by someone else. Almost everyone who goes to prison is eventually released, but the prospects for most of them to live crime-free have been *damaged* by the effects of their prison stay. Moreover, concrete practical and legal limits on punishment establish a surprisingly low ceiling for the potential deterrent power of a prison sentence. A child who is exposed to a parent or sibling who went to prison has an *increased*, rather than a decreased, risk of incarceration, and this testifies to the weakness of the deterrent effect of the sanction.

The limited capability of prisons to prevent crime is surely one of the reasons that, in the 33 years that prison populations have been rising continuously, trends in crime rates have been anything but systematic: they went up in the 1970s; down, then up in the 1980s; and up, then down in the 1990s. Today's headlines raise the fear that after a decade-long drop in crime, the trend may turn upward again (Frieden 2006), even as prison populations continue to rise. There is a puzzling discontinuity between imprisonment rates, which have increased every year since 1973, and crime rates, which have been up and down during that time and are, today, about what they were in 1970, when the prison population was at its lowest level in a generation.

This discontinuity is not discussed very much in the substantial social science literature assessing the impact of prisons on crime rates. Some studies, especially older ones, suggest that the impact is substantial. An equivalent body of studies, many of them more recent, find little or no impact on crime. As weaknesses in the earlier methodology are corrected by newer studies' more careful designs, the results show smaller connections between incarceration and crime prevention. Today, an overwhelming majority opinion is emerging that prison use has probably reduced crime, but only by a marginal amount. Scholars also tend to agree that additional growth in prison populations will produce ever-decreasing marginal returns in public safety (for reviews, see Spelman 1994, 2000)....

Black Males

That black men have been put behind bars at higher rates than any other group is not a new observation. But their rate of incarceration, always high, has been growing more rapidly than that for any other subgroup of males, and this is especially true for black high school dropouts. Sociologist Bruce Western has shown that, in the last 25 years, black high school dropouts have been almost five times more likely to go to prison than white high school dropouts, and that this difference in incarceration rates has been growing (Western 2006)....

The main vehicle for the different rate of incarceration for black males is the drug laws. This situation is not because black males are more likely to use drugs. Black high school seniors report using drugs at a rate that is only three-quarters that of white high school seniors, and white students have about three times the number of emergency room visits for drug overdose; this discrepancy in rates has remained steady (or grown) for over a decade (Western 2006, citing Johnston et al. 2004). Blacks, however, are much more likely than whites to be arrested for drug crimes. At the beginning of the incarceration boom (1970), blacks had twice the arrest rate for drugs as whites. As the drug war intensified with a nationwide trend toward mandatory prison sentences for people convicted of drug crime, the arrest rate for blacks grew much more rapidly than for whites, reaching a peak arrest rate in 1989 that was *four* times that of whites. The gap between white and black arrests has declined since then, but the remaining disparity still makes blacks two and a half times more likely than whites to be arrested for drug crimes (Western 2006): Today's laws ensure that most of these arrests will result in some form of incarceration....

Poor, urban black men, especially school dropouts, live in neighborhoods that have been crushed by poverty. They are the men of those neighborhoods—the fathers, brothers, uncles, and sons. When they go to prison, they join many of their neighbors who have already taken that route. Collectively, over time, their high rates of incarceration become the standard for the neighborhood. Sociologist Peter St. Jean has concluded, on the basis of a nearly five-year ethnography, that these men become "part of a cultural attitude which seemed to treat incarceration as a rite of passage." ...

Damage to Communities

There is a steadily growing body of literature that sheds light on the consequences of high rates of incarceration for individuals from the poorest communities. The level of concentration is substantial: studies estimate that in some of the most impoverished locations, as many as one-fifth of adult men are behind bars on any given day (Lynch and Sabol 2004a). Because these men stay behind prison bars for only a couple of years at a time (jail terms are much shorter, typically much less than a year), they cycle back into their communities, only to be replaced by other cohorts. Many who leave prison come back in a few months. The cycling of these young men through the prison system becomes a dynamic of the poor neighborhoods, so that a family is hardly ever without a son, uncle, or father who has done prison time (Clear, Rose, and Ryder 2001).

The effects on the individual of going to prison are well-documented. Ex-prisoners earn less money during their lifetimes, find it harder to stay employed, are less likely to marry, and suffer a range of medical and psychological problems (see Western, Patillo, and Weiman, 2004). This is important ecologically as well, because the ubiquity of prison touches *almost everybody* in these neighborhoods. Every family has a member who has limited labor-market options; every family knows someone struggling to stay out of jail, many mothers are raising children whose fathers have a prison record. For children in these neighborhoods, merely having a parent or brother who has gone to prison elevates their risk of doing the same; in this way, incarceration serves as its own breeding ground.

Prison is thus woven into the fabric of these communities, with its stark implications for social networks, social capital, and, ultimately, informal social control. Men who are behind bars are the missing links in the social network of those who remain behind. Since these networks have limited strength to begin with, the widespread reality of prison undermines their ability to provide social capital. And neighborhoods with lots of men behind bars are places with especially low endowments of social capital. Because prison saps the limited economic and interpersonal resources of families with a loved one behind bars (Braman 2004), both the families and the neighborhood stay impoverished.

Another consequence of this dynamic is that there are also diminished levels of informal social control when so many members of a community are behind bars or between prison stays. Child-rearing is less likely to implant delinquency-resistant self controls (Weatherburn and Lind 2001), and the pro-social attitudes that usually insulate youths against breaking the law are less likely to develop when they are raised in places where a lot of men go to prison (Crutchfield 2005). Since a neighborhood's level of *informal* social control is far more important for overall public safety than is formal social control, deficits in informal social controls that result from high levels of incarceration are, in fact, criminogenic. The high incarceration rates in poor communities destabilize the social relationships in these places and help cause crime rather than prevent it (Rose and Clear 1998; Clear et al. 2003).

Because over 90% of prisoners are men, the social effects of concentrated incarceration are easily seen when a lot of men go to prison from a particular place. But the smaller number of women who cycle in and out of prison from these same neighborhoods does not mean that their *impact* is as small as their numbers. The role women play in their social networks, social capital, and informal social controls, especially in very poor urban neighborhoods, is thought to be more important, per person, than men. Thus, those much smaller levels of incarceration for women seem to produce the same destabilizing results as for men, with an equivalent pattern of increased crime (George and Lalonde 2005)....

The Lack of Strategic Options

The most commonly suggested reforms in today's penal landscape are unlikely to have much to do with the growth of incarceration, whether they are adopted or not. Rehabilitation programs, even if they become wildly successful, will reduce prison return rates only at the margin. The same goes for the new interest in "reentry programs." Three decades of experience with "alternatives to incarceration" suggest that they, likewise, will not reduce the size of the prison population. These are each good ideas, worth our investment on grounds of humaneness and practicality, but they are largely irrelevant to the central need to slow the growth of incarceration....

Communities, Coercive Mobility, and Public Safety

The concentration of young, disadvantaged males of color in prisons has been the subject of substantial empirical work and policy commentary. Their concentration in impoverished, minority neighborhoods has not received the same amount of attention. This is unfortunate, because neighborhoods, "places," matter. Neighborhoods are the building blocks for community life, and community life is an important wellspring for a good quality of life. Clearly, however, the nature and quality of community life varies from one neighborhood to another. That is one reason there has been a resurgence of interest in the influence of neighborhood and community contexts (Gephart and Brooks-Gunn 1997)....

A Framework for Identifying the Community Effects of Concentrated Incarceration

The consequences of imprisonment to the community are embedded in three important legitimate systems of neighborhood order: family, economic, and political....

Familial Systems

Communities that contribute greater numbers of people to incarceration experience higher rates of family disruption, single-parent families, and births to young, single adults (Lynch and Sabol 1992). This close association suggests a plausible hypothesis that one is, in part, a product of another (or at least that they are mutually reinforcing phenomena). Disruptions are numerous: parenting is interrupted, role models are removed, families move and change school districts, mothers go on welfare, children receive less supervision, the number of single-parent families increases, incarceration experiences are models for children, and so forth. This chain of negative effects on the family—the socialization unit of private social control—contributes to a gradual reduction of social capital within the community. None of these changes by itself "causes" delinquency, but such disruptions are associated with earlier and more active delinquent careers. Their effects would be expected to be additive and, in more extreme levels of removal of males, interactive. Moreover, these occur in addition to the destabilizing effects of crime.

Economic Systems

The microeconomics of concentrated incarceration and reentry create neighborhoods of (mostly) men who have depleted their labor-market prospects in places where labor markets are weak to begin with. Imprisonment in large numbers ravages the supplies of local human capital and leaves a gap in employable residents. Prior to incarceration, most prisoners are an economic resource to their neighborhoods and immediate families. For example, in impoverished neighborhoods, a work-age male generates economic activity from a variety of endeavors, including off-the-books work, intermittent illicit drug trade, theft, welfare, and part-time employment. When he goes to prison, some of this economic activity is taken up by others who replace him, and some is not. When he comes back from prison, his legitimate labor-market prospects are even more bleak than they were before.

Also, the macroeconomics of crime policy damage inner-city communities by shifting government funding away from improving those communities and toward penal institutions instead. Once they are arrested and incarcerated, these people's economic value is transformed and transferred into penal capital—the demand for salaried correctional employees to provide security. It is also transferred to the locality of the prison, where the penal system's employees reside. The harsh budgetary politics of the 1990s have corresponded to equally harsh punitive politics, in which correctional expenditures have grown by billions of dollars annually while money to support schools, supplement tuition, provide summer jobs for teens, and so forth was cut. The latter funds had provided meager support for communities already hard hit by crime and justice, but the funds became more meager still. Whatever role these social programs play in propping up informal networks of social control is eliminated with the depletion of funding. A neighborhood experiencing economic loss as a result of increased incarceration will also experience an increase in crime.

Political Systems

The overwhelming presence of the American criminal justice system in these impoverished communities goes a long way to defining the meaning of the state for this segment of society. The state is most likely encountered as a coercive agent of control rather than a fair agent of justice; and when this perception is true, people are less likely to conform their behavior to the requirements of the law (Tyler 1990). Most minority-group children can tell stories of racism in the criminal justice system, and validation of these tales is apparent to the eye. This is one of the reasons it is no surprise that many inner-city young people define the power of the state as a nemesis to be avoided rather than an ally to be cultivated. In the community, disillusionment with the political structure often erodes residents' feelings of empowerment and reduces their willingness to participate in local politics. As a result, the call for citizen involvement may fall on deaf ears.

Furthermore, there has been a systematic move to bar people who have felony convictions or who have been to prison from political participation (Uggen and Manza 2005). Laws that disenfranchise citizens with felony convictions have disparate impact on African Americans, many of whom are already alienated from politics. These laws make certain that inner-city areas with many disenfranchised residents are underrepresented in the vote. One result is that policies friendly to inner-city constituencies have disproportionally poor political payoff for those who run for office....

The Impact of Incarceration on Community Safety

The coercive mobility hypothesis holds that high rates of incarceration, concentrated in poor communities, will destabilize social networks in those communities, thereby undermining informal social control and leading to more crime. A conceptual model of this hypothesis is provided by Figure 29.1.

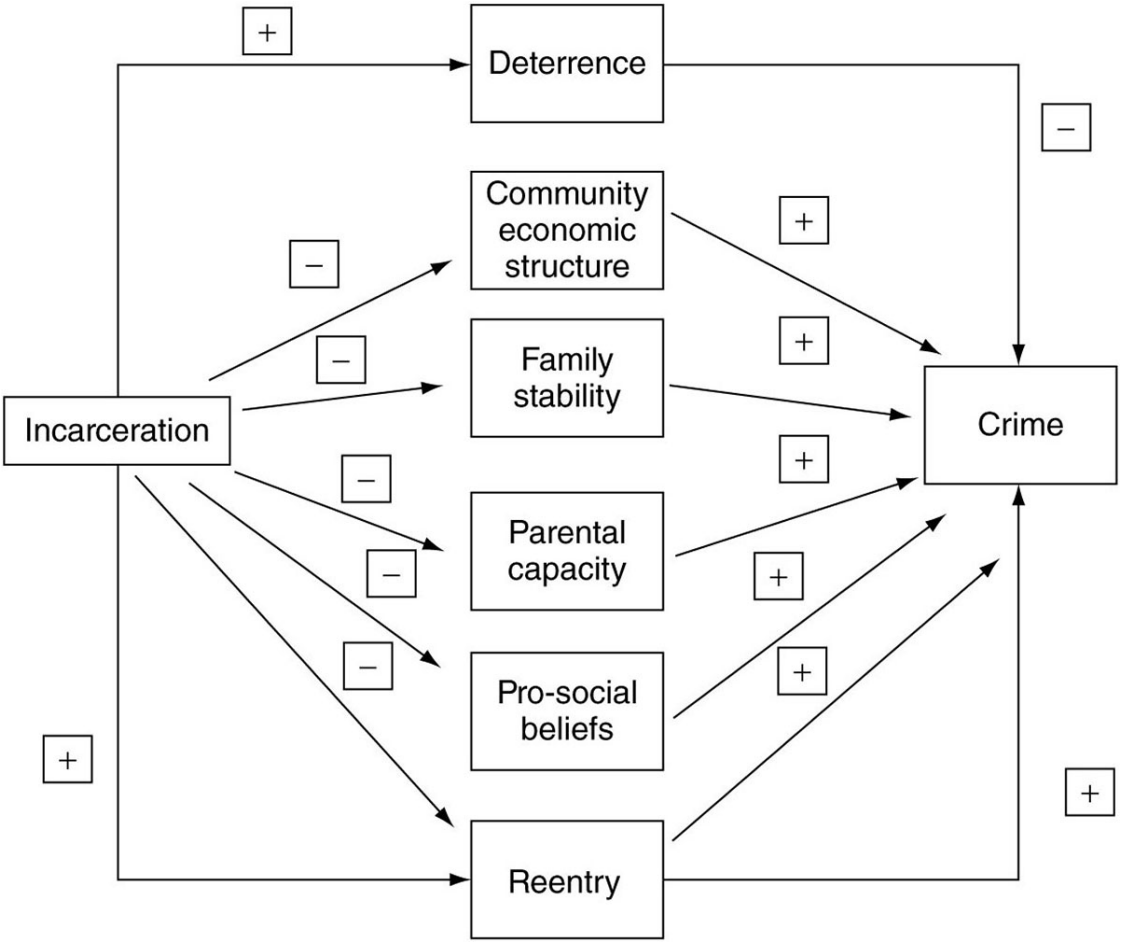


FIGURE 29.1 The Impact of Concentrated Incarceration on Poor Communities and Crime (the figure shows coercive mobility—the impact of incarceration on communities) Source: Clear, Rose, Waring, and Scully 2003.

This figure posits that incarceration will tend to suppress crime through incapacitation and deterrence. Given what we know about the impact of incarceration on crime, we would expect these effects to be small. We would also expect that, as levels of incarceration grow in impoverished communities, there will be a negative effect on the community's economic structure, family stability, parental capacity, and pro-social beliefs. Each of these effects would also be small. There will also be crimes committed by those now in reentry from prison. It is easy to see how these latter effects, even if small, might in the aggregate outweigh the impact of deterrence and incapacitation. This is the coercive mobility hypothesis, … after a certain point, high incarceration rates concentrated in impoverished communities will cause crime to increase rather than decrease….

The Obvious Need: Sentencing Reform

Any solution begins with a recognition of two threshold points: First, programmatic tinkering has not reduced the prison population to date, and it will never have much effect, even under the most optimistic assumptions. Second, to overcome mass incarceration requires that we incarcerate fewer people. There is no getting around it. If the problem is mass imprisonment, then the solution is to change the laws that send people to prison and sometimes keep them there for lengthy terms. Thus, we need to consider the points discussed below.

The Number of Entries and Their Length of Stay Fully Determine the Prison Population

There are two points of leverage for controlling the size of the prison population. This conclusion follows from the simple fact that two variables fully determine the number of prisoners in any prison system: the number of people who go in, and how long they stay (Frost 2006). It follows that the best way to influence the prison population on a major scale is to change either, or both, of these numbers. The choices are not subtle.

Mandatory Sentencing

Eliminating mandatory prison terms across the board would have a substantial impact on the prison population. Much of this impact would involve having fewer people serving time for drug-related crime. There is substantial public support for our dealing differently with drug crime. For instance, a large minority favors decriminalization of some drugs....

Sentence Length

In the last 30 years, the average time served by people going to prison has almost doubled, and the amount of time they are under parole supervision has also increased. This has meant that the system maintains a growing prison population through length-of-stay decisions and post-release failure rates....

Length of stay in the United States could be rolled back considerably and leave the country with a smaller prison population and a punitive policy more in line with other Western democracies. Because decreased length of stay does *not* lead to increased chance of failure (if anything, the relationship is the opposite), and almost everyone going to prison gets out anyway, we can reduce sentence lengths substantially without increasing crime rates. For example, if the average length of stay, which today is 30 months for new court commitments, were instead 20 months or even 24 months, the prison population would drop as a consequence, with little long-term crime increase....

Toward a New Philosophy of Penal Justice: The Idea of Community Justice

Community justice is an emerging paradigm that proposes a rethinking of the aims of the criminal justice system. It sets as a central criterion that the justice system contribute to the quality of life in communities—to help make the places where people work, live, and raise their families, *good* places to do these things....

Because community justice is an idea with a variety of expressions, it is, necessarily, a broad concept that cannot be covered under a single umbrella statement. There are three core elements of all versions of community justice, however. First, there is an emphasis on restoration. Victims' losses are restored, those who are convicted of crime likewise may expect to be able to be restored if they take appropriate action, and the community peace that was fractured by the crime is, for want of a better term, restored. Second, there is an emphasis on maintaining those who are convicted of crimes within their communities. This enables both them and their loved ones to keep their community ties, and it eases post-penalty restoration to community life. Third, purely punitive sanctions, such as solitary confinement, are deemphasized in favor of ameliorative sanctions such as community service. For these reasons, community justice, in whatever form it takes, is an idea that proposes minimal use of imprisonment. It is a philosophy that provides a philosophical pathway out of the current morass.

How would it work? What would our community justice strategies entail?

Community Justice Strategies

Community justice initiatives could thrive under a regime of reduced imprisonment. They could also contribute to reductions in imprisonment. They will have three elements: (1) a focus on high-incarceration places; (2) attention to norms and values in those places; and (3) attempts to improve schools, jobs, and housing as targets....

Norms and Values

Community justice can be described as a series of programs, but that description fails to capture the central ethic. Community justice tries to restore these places' informal social-control mechanisms so that they may perform functions that have been taken over by formal social control agencies in the face of their breakdown. This entails strengthening the social-control capacity of families and neighborhood groups, as well as improving the effectiveness of schools and increasing the vibrancy of the private sector's presence....

Targets: Schools, Jobs, and Housing

A third aspect of community justice is the desire to strengthen the social support provided by informal social controls. The thesis is that, in strong communities, these institutions of informal social control are a main source of public safety, but in high-incarceration communities, they do not perform that function effectively.

Inner-city schools in impoverished neighborhoods are notoriously poor at educating, socializing, and preparing young people for adult roles. One in five adult African Americans lacks a high school degree—twice the rate of white youths—and in impoverished neighborhoods, the picture is worse.... Lack of a high school diploma is one of the factors that most distinguishes the prison population from nonprisoners. Poor inner-city schools are so problem-stricken that they have trouble retaining their youth. The result is high rates of truancy and school dropout—factors that serve as "a pipeline to prison" (Losen and Wald 2003).

The failure of schools in poor, mostly minority inner-city neighborhoods is a precursor to a lifetime of troubles in the labor market for most residents. Unemployment among men in poor neighborhoods is a double negative for the places they live: first, these men fail to bring the economic and network resources to their intimates—assets that most other young men provide through bridging to work; second, they are a drain on the already thin financial and personal resources of those around them, as these men seek support for their own lives.

Public housing is a staple of these high-incarceration neighborhoods. Public housing need not be problem housing, but it often is. All of the so-called million-dollar blocks in Brooklyn—places where over a million dollars was being spent annually in incarcerating residents of that block—are public housing blocks (Cadora, Swartz, and Gordon 2002). When there are problems in public housing, they often take the form of gangs, drug markets, and violence. These problems persist, even though people with criminal records are prohibited from living in some types of public housing, and getting arrested can subject a public-housing resident to immediate eviction.

These are the problems. And there is plenty of evidence of the benefits of overcoming these problems. Children who finish school, even in poor neighborhoods, compared to those who do not finish, are less likely to become involved in *both* juvenile and adult crime (Hawkins et al. 2000). Despite having juvenile records or criminal records as youth, young men in their late twenties and older who are provided with job opportunities, even if marginal, become involved in crime less frequently in adulthood (Uggen 2000). People who leave inadequate public housing in impoverished urban areas to live in places with higher quality housing and better schools achieve more positive school and economic outcomes (Polikoff 2004). Men who survive crime-free for seven years past their most recent criminal conviction no longer look more likely to commit a crime than do other adult males their age (Kurlychek, Brame, and Bushway 2006)....

The funds needed for the agenda of community justice, strengthening the informal social-control capacities of poor communities already exist. They are tied up in the inefficiencies of prison and therefore are unavailable for other priorities. But by shifting these funds to community justice initiatives, two goals are accomplished. First, the community-development programs receive the resources they need to strengthen poor communities. Second, and just as important, money spent in the community prevents the collateral damage that otherwise comes from locking up so many residents. Community justice can be a solution that does not require new funds....

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Clear argues that incarceration does not reduce crime by a large amount. Why?
2. Clear states that high levels of incarceration increase community crime rates for several reasons. Describe these reasons, being sure to note the effects of incarceration on "familial systems," "economic systems," and "political systems."
3. Clear contends that high rates of incarceration reduce informal control in a community. Describe the ways in which his argument is similar to and different from that of the social disorganization theorists in Part II. Be sure to discuss his concept of "coercive mobility."
4. Clear argues that rehabilitation programs will not solve the problems he describes. Why? What solutions does he propose?
5. Clear draws on control and social disorganization theories to explain why high incarceration rates increase community crime rates. What arguments might strain and social learning theorists make about the effects of high incarceration rates on communities?
6. How might decreases in mass imprisonment reduce the criminogenic effects of coercive mobility?

30.
The New Jim Crow*

Michelle Alexander

As the post-Civil War Reconstruction era collapsed, politicians in the South were allowed by their northern White counterparts to pass laws that enforced racial segregation in public spaces and that barred African Americans from voting, jury duty, and civic participation. Extending from about 1877 to 1965, this period of sustained racial oppression was called the "Jim Crow" era. The desire to escape this American apartheid was a key source of the Great Migration (1910–1970s) in which, according to Isabel Wilkerson (2010: 9), "some six million black southerners left the land of their forefathers and fanned out across the country for an uncertain existence in nearly every other corner of America."

Michelle Alexander (2010, 2011), however, has documented that in contemporary times, African Americans have not fully escaped state-sponsored deprivation of their social and legal rights, for there is now a "New Jim Crow." This novel form of institutional racism is not confined to the South but found across the nation. Unlike the old Jim Crow, the new variety is pernicious because it is ostensibly colorblind—a burden imposed on anyone who violates the law and is convicted, in particular, of a felony. But as Alexander illuminates, the weight of this burden is shouldered disproportionately by African Americans.

Alexander's analysis begins by calling attention to the United States' decades-long embrace of mass imprisonment and, more generally, of expanding legal control over its residents. Even though the past decade has seen the United States stall if not reverse this punitive trend, more than 6.4 million people remain under correctional supervision—1 in every 40 adults. On any given day, the count includes 2.1 million residents behind bars and 4.3 million on probation or parole (Maruschak and Minton, 2020). For a host of reasons, however, blacks are at a higher risk of being arrested and incarcerated. Most consequential, research shows that whereas 8% of all U.S. adults have a felony conviction, the figure for African Americans is 33%. Such a conviction matters in the United States because it can bar a former offender from access to certain jobs, housing, federal benefits, service on juries, voting, and much more. These economic, social, and civil disabilities inscribed in law are called the "collateral consequences" of conviction. A national inventory of these statutes and regulations placed the number at nearly 45,000 (Burton et al., 2020).

Alexander thus highlights an unseen cost of the movement to use "get-tough" policies to arrest, incarcerate, and attach felony records to generations of blacks, especially younger males targeted in the nation's failed "war on drugs." To say that justice is colorblind—all offenders are punished equally regardless of race—is to ignore the disproportionate effects of legal sanctions on people of color. As with Jim Crow in the past, observes Alexander (2011: 20), there "is an elaborate system of control, complete with political disenfranchisement and legalized discrimination in every major realm of economic and social life." As labeling theorists have warned (see Part VI), this treatment risks impeding successful reentry to society by released prisoners. But there is, as Alexander (2011: 24) knows, a more profound question to address: "After all, who among us would want a loved one struggling with drug abuse to be put in a cage, labeled a felon, and subjected to a lifetime of discrimination, scorn and social exclusion?"

References

Alexander, Michelle. 2010. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press.

____. 2011. "The New Jim Crow." *Ohio State Journal of Criminal Law* **9** (1): 7–26.

Burton, Alexander L., Velmer S. Burton, Jr., Francis T. Cullen, Justin T. Pickett, Leah C. Butler, and Angela J. Thielo. 2020. "Beyond the New Jim Crow: Public Support for Removing and Regulating Collateral Consequences." *Federal Probation* **84** (3): 19–33.

Maruschak, Laura M. and Todd D. Minton. 2020. *Correctional Populations in the United States, 2017–2018*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice.

Wilkerson, Isabel. 2010. *Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. New York: Vintage.

By the time I left the ACLU, I had come to suspect that I was wrong about the criminal justice system. It was not just another institution infected with racial bias, but rather a different beast entirely.... Quite belatedly, I came to see that mass incarceration in the United States had, in fact, emerged as a stunningly comprehensive and well-disguised system of racialized social control that functions in a manner strikingly similar to Jim Crow.

I state my basic thesis in the introduction to my book, *The New Jim Crow:*

> What has changed since the collapse of Jim Crow has less to do with the basic structure of our society than the language we use to justify it. In the era of colorblindness, it is no longer socially permissible to use race, explicitly, as a justification for discrimination, exclusion, and social contempt. So we don't. Rather than rely on race, we use our criminal justice system to label people of color "criminals" and then engage in all the practices we supposedly left behind. Today it is perfectly legal to discriminate against criminals in nearly all the ways it was once legal to discriminate against African Americans. Once you're labeled a felon, the old forms of discrimination—employment discrimination, housing discrimination, denial of the right to vote, and exclusion from jury service—are suddenly legal. As a criminal, you have scarcely more rights, and arguably less respect, than a black man living in Alabama at the height of Jim Crow. We have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it....

Here are some facts I uncovered in the course of my work and research that you probably have not heard on the evening news:

- More African American adults are under correctional control today—in prison or jail, on probation or parole—than were enslaved in 1850, a decade before the Civil War began.
- In 2007 more black men were disenfranchised than in 1870, the year the Fifteenth Amendment was ratified prohibiting laws that explicitly deny the right to vote on the basis of race. During the Jim Crow era, African Americans continued to be denied access to the ballot through poll taxes and literacy tests. Those laws have been struck down, but today felon disenfranchisement laws accomplish what poll taxes and literacy tests ultimately could not.
- In many large urban areas in the United States, the majority of working-age African American men have criminal records. In fact, it was reported in 2002 that, in the Chicago area, if you take into account prisoners, the figure is nearly 80%.

Those bearing criminal records and cycling in and out of our prisons today are part of a growing undercaste—not class, caste—a group of people, defined largely by race, who are relegated to a permanent second-class status by law. They can be denied the right to vote, automatically excluded from juries, and legally discriminated against in employment, housing, access to education, and public benefits, much as their grandparents and great-grandparents were during the Jim Crow era....

Today, I believe the criminal justice system has been used once again in a manner that effectively re-creates caste in America. Our criminal justice system functions more like a caste system than a system of crime control.

For those who find that claim difficult to swallow, consider the facts. Our prison system has quintupled for reasons that have stunningly little do with crime. In less than 30 years, the U.S. penal population exploded from around 300,000 to more than 2 million. The United States now has the highest rate of incarceration in the world, dwarfing the rates of nearly every developed country, including highly repressive regimes like China and Iran.

In fact, if our nation were to return to the incarceration rates of the 1970s—a time, by the way, when civil rights activists thought that imprisonment rates were egregiously high—we would have to release four out of five people who are in prison today. More than a million people employed by the criminal justice system could lose their jobs. That is how enormous and deeply entrenched the new system has become in a very short period of time.

As staggering as those figures are, they actually obscure the severity of the crisis in poor communities of color. Professor Loïc Wacquant has argued that the term "mass incarceration" itself is a misnomer, since it implies that nearly everyone has been subject to the new system of control. But, of course that is not the case. The overwhelming majority of the increase in imprisonment has been poor people of color, with the most astonishing rates of incarceration found among black men. It was estimated several years ago that, in Washington, D.C.—our nation's capital—three out of four young black men (and nearly all those in the poorest neighborhoods) could expect to serve time in prison. Rates of incarceration nearly as shocking can be found in other communities of color across America.

The reality is that the overwhelming majority of people who are swept into this system are non-violent offenders. In this regard, it is important to keep in mind that most people who are under correctional control are not in prison or jail. As of 2008, there were approximately 2.3 million people in prisons and jails, and a staggering 5.1 million people under "community correctional supervision"—i.e., on probation or parole. Millions more have felony records and spend their lives cycling in and out of prison, unable to find work or shelter, unable to vote or to serve on juries. This system depends on the prison label, not prison time. It does not matter whether you have actually spent time in prison; your second-class citizenship begins the moment you are branded a felon. It is this badge of inferiority—the criminal record—that ushers you into a parallel social universe in which discrimination is, once again, perfectly legal….

In this way, a new racial undercaste has been created in an astonishingly short period of time. Millions of people of color are now saddled with criminal records and legally denied the very rights that were supposedly won in the Civil Rights Movement….

In my experience, those who have been incarcerated have little difficulty recognizing the parallels between mass incarceration and Jim Crow. Many former prisoners have told me, "It's slavery on the inside; Jim Crow when you get out." Prisoners are often forced to work for little or no pay. Once released, they are denied basic civil and human rights until they die. They are treated as though they possess an incurable defect, a shameful trait that can never be fully eradicated or redeemed. In the words of one woman who is currently incarcerated:

> When I leave here it will be very difficult for me in the sense that I'm a felon. That I will always be a felon … it will affect my job, it will affect my education … custody [of my children], it can affect child support, it can affect everywhere—family, friends, housing…. People that are convicted of drug crimes can't even get housing anymore…. Yes, I did my prison time. How long are you going to punish me as a result of it?…

What is painfully obvious to many trapped within the system, remains largely invisible to those of us who have decent jobs and zoom around on freeways, passing by the virtual and literal prisons in which members of the undercaste live.

None of this is to say, of course, that mass incarceration and Jim Crow are the "same." There are significant differences between mass incarceration and earlier forms of racial control, to be sure—many of which are described in some detail in my book. Just as there were vast differences between slavery and Jim Crow, there are important differences between Jim Crow and mass incarceration. Yet all three (slavery, Jim Crow, and mass incarceration) have operated as tightly networked systems of laws, policies, customs, and institutions that operate collectively to ensure the subordinate status of a group defined largely by race. When we step back and view the system of mass incarceration as a whole, there is a profound sense of deja vu. There is a familiar stigma and shame. There is an elaborate system of control, complete with political disenfranchisement and legalized discrimination in every major realm of economic and social life. And there is the production of racial meaning and racial boundaries….

What, realistically, do we expect these folks to do? What is this system designed to do? It seems designed to send them right back to prison, which is what in fact happens most of the time. About 70% of released prisoners are rearrested within three years, and the majority of those who return to prison do so within a matter of months, because the barriers to mere survival on the outside are so immense.

Remarkably, as bad as all the formal barriers to political and economic inclusion are, many formerly incarcerated people tell me that is not the worst of it. The worst is the stigma that follows you for the rest of your life. It is not just the denial of the job, but the look that crosses an employer's face when he sees the "box" has been checked. It is not just the denial of public housing, but the shame of being a grown man having to ask your grandma to sleep in her basement at night. The shame associated with criminality can be so intense that people routinely try to "pass." …

There are two major reasons, I believe, that so many of us are in denial about the existence of racial caste in America. The first is traceable to a profound misunderstanding regarding how racial oppression actually works. If someone were to visit the United States from another country (or another planet) and ask: 'Is the U.S. criminal justice system some kind of tool of racial control?', most Americans would swiftly deny it. Numerous reasons would leap to mind why that could not possibly be the case. The visitor would be told that crime rates, black culture, or bad schools were to blame. "The system is not run by a bunch of racists," the apologist would explain. They would say, "It is run by people who are trying to fight crime." Because mass incarceration is officially colorblind, and because most people today do not think of themselves as racist, it seems inconceivable that the system could function much like a racial caste system….

People of good will—and bad—have been unwilling to see black and brown men, in their humanness, as entitled to the same care, compassion, and concern that would be extended to one's friends, neighbors, or loved ones.

After all, who among us would want a loved one struggling with drug abuse to be put in a cage, labeled a felon, and then subjected to a lifetime of discrimination, scorn and social exclusion? Most Americans would not wish that fate on anyone they cared about. But whom do we care about? In America, the answer to that question is still linked to race. Dr. King recognized that it was this indifference to the plight of African Americans that supported the institutions of slavery and Jim Crow. And this callous racial indifference supports mass incarceration today.

Another reason that we remain in deep denial is that we, as a nation, have a false picture of our racial reality. Prisoners are literally erased from the nation's economic picture. Unemployment and poverty statistics do not include people behind bars. In fact, standard reports underestimate the true jobless rates for less educated black men by as much as 24 percentage points. During the much heralded economic boom of the 1990s—the Clinton years—African American men were the only group to experience a steep increase in real joblessness, a development directly traceable to the increase in the penal population. During the 1990s—the best of times for the rest of America—the true jobless rates for non-college black men was a staggering 42%….

When we pull back the curtain and take a look at what our so-called colorblind society creates without affirmative action, we see a familiar social, political and economic structure—the structure of racial caste. And the entry into this new caste system can be found at the prison gate.

So where do we go from here? What can be done to dismantle this new system of control? … What is needed, I believe, is a broad based social movement, one that rivals in size, scope, depth, and courage the movement that was begun in the 1960s and left unfinished. It must be a multi-racial, multi-ethnic movement that includes poor and working class whites—a group that has consistently been pit against poor people of color, triggering the rise of successive new systems of control….

But before this movement can even get underway, a great awakening is required. We must awaken from our colorblind slumber to the realities of race in America. And we must be willing to embrace those labeled criminals—not necessarily their behavior, but them—their humanness. For it has been the refusal and failure to fully acknowledge the humanity and dignity of *all* persons that has formed the sturdy foundation of all caste systems.

It is our task, I firmly believe, to end not just mass incarceration, but the history and cycle of caste in America.

---

* Reprinted with permission from: Michelle Alexander. 2011. "The New Jim Crow." *Ohio State Journal of Criminal Law* 9 (1):7–26.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the history of the Jim Crow system in the South that began following Reconstruction? How did it legalize the racial oppression of African Americans?
2. Why does Michelle Alexander use the term "The New Jim Crow" to describe how collateral consequences attached to felony convictions expose African Americans to a system of legal economic discrimination, social exclusion, and disenfranchisement? How is this system "colorblind" on the surface but not in practice?
3. James Jacobs has argued that any conviction today leads, in effect, to a person having an "eternal criminal record." How has the internet made it virtually impossible to escape the stigma of a conviction? Is this a good thing or a bad thing?
4. One controversial issue today is whether those convicted of a crime should have the right to vote? Which of the following would you favor: (1) prisoners should have the right to vote like anyone else because it teaches good citizenship; (2) prisoners should be allowed to vote only after they have completed their sentence and paid their debt to society; (3) prisoners should lose their right to vote forever because they harmed society and cannot be trusted.

31.
A Theory of African American Offending*

James D. Unnever

Shaun L. Gabbidon

In his classic statement and study of social bond theory in Causes of Delinquency, *Travis Hirschi (1969) explored whether the wayward conduct of African Americans and whites had different sources (see also Unnever et al., 2009). Hirschi concluded that "there is no reason to believe that the causes of crime among Negroes are different from those among whites" (p. 80). "It follows," he added, "that we need not study Negro boys to determine the causes of their delinquency" (p. 80).*

In a way, the view that the causes of crime are "general"—the same for everyone—rather than "race-specific" has important ideological implications. As espoused by Hirschi in his day, the generality perspective represented a rejection of racist theories that attributed minorities' illegalities to their inherent intellectual and moral inferiority. Essentially, people are people, and they offend for the same reasons.

James Unnever and Shaun Gabbidon, however, argue that the generality view is partially—and importantly—mistaken. They agree that the causes of African Americans' and whites' crime are often the same. For example, abusive or ineffective parenting will increase the risk of offending regardless of a youngster's race or ethnicity. But Unnever and Gabbidon point out that African Americans and whites have a fundamentally different lived reality. As members of a historically oppressed minority group, blacks are perpetually at risk of confronting majority group members who harbor prejudice and act toward them in a discriminatory way. They must overcome implicit and explicit negative racial stereotypes that can devalue their personal identity. And they must negotiate a criminal justice system that they perceive as unjust—a system whose officials stop and frisk them even when they are doing nothing wrong and that disproportionately imprisons and disenfranchises them (Alexander, 2010; Tonry, 2011).

Theoretically, Unnever and Gabbidon present a model that is consistent with Agnew's (2006) general strain theory (see Chapter 14). Growing up, African American youngsters—some more than others—encounter the strain of "being treated in a negative manner by others" (Agnew, 2006: 19). Because this strain is unjust, it is especially likely to generate negative emotions, such as anger, that can lead to crime (p. 62). General strain theory recognizes, however, that not everyone responds to strain by breaking the law. Instead, there are factors that condition this response and determine whether an individual engages in criminal or noncriminal coping.

Importantly, Unnever and Gabbidon address this issue of why only some African Americans respond to racial oppression through a criminal adaptation. The key to unlocking this mystery, they argue, is understanding the nature of racial socialization. In brief, parents of black children face the extra burden of teaching their children how to cope with diverse life experiences when, due to their race, they are devalued and mistreated. Those who racially socialize their offspring effectively equip them with the skills to negotiate a world that, at times, is hostile. But some parents do not address this issue or teach their kids to cope by mistrusting whites and by responding to

perceived injustices with defiance. This approach tends to foster negative emotions and to weaken social bonds to conventional (white) institutions—both factors that place youngsters at risk for sustained criminal offending.

In summary, Unnever and Gabbidon reject general theories of crime and call upon scholars to take seriously that African Americans and whites live in an America that has both a shared reality and a racially specific reality (see also Unnever et al., 2019). They argue that race matters, and that it is nonsensical to assume that being a person of color is unrelated to the quality of one's life experiences, emotions endured, and behaviors chosen. Notably, Unnever and his colleagues have provided evidence that is emerging in support of the theory's propositions (Unnever, 2014; Unnever et al., 2016).

References

Agnew, Robert. 2006. *Pressured into Crime: An Overview of General Strain Theory*. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

Alexander, Michelle. 2010. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press.

Hirschi, Travis. 1969. *Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Tonry, Michael. 2011. *Punishing Race: A Continuing American Dilemma*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Unnever, James D. 2014. "A Theory of African American Offending: A Test of Core Propositions." *Race and Justice* **4**: 98–123.

Unnever, James D., Francis T. Cullen, and J. C. Barnes. 2016. "Racial Discrimination, Weakened School Bonds, and Problematic Behaviors: Testing a Theory of African American Offending." *Journal of Research in Crime Delinquency* **53**: 139–164.

Unnever, James D., Francis T. Cullen, Scott A. Mathers, Timothy E. McClure, and Marisa C. Allison. 2009. "Racial Discrimination and Hirschi's Criminological Classic: A Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge." *Justice Quarterly* **26**: 377–409.

Unnever, James D., Shaun L. Gabbidon, and Cecilia Chouhy, eds. 2019. *Building a Black Criminology: Race, Theory, and Crime—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **24**. New York: Routledge.

---

* Republished with permission of Taylor and Francis Group LLC Books, from *A Theory of African American Offending: Race, Racism, and Crime,* James D. Unnever and Shaun L. Gabbidon, 2011; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

The Basic Premise of Our Theory of African American Offending

A basic assumption of our theory of African American offending is that blacks have a unique worldview (or cosmology, axiology, aesthetics, cognitive landscape, collective memory) of the American social order that is not shared by whites and other minorities (see Coll, Lamberty, Jenkins, McAdoo, Crnic, Wasik, and Garcia, 1996; Feagin, 2010; Gay, 2004; Harrell, 2000; Jean and Feagin, 1998; Mazama, 2001; Oliver, 2006). We argue that this worldview has been shaped by racial dynamics largely outside of their control. Thus, our theory assumes that African Americans, unlike any other racial group (e.g., whites) or other ethnic minorities (e.g., Hispanics), have a unique racial lens that informs their beliefs and behaviors especially as they relate to the salience of race and how racism impacts their lives in the U.S.

We argue that nearly every African American shares this worldview. A core belief of this worldview is that race and racism matters. This means that nearly every African American believes that they will encounter racial prejudice and racial discrimination during their lives because they are black. Thus, African Americans believe that they will not be treated as fairly as other races (e.g., whites) or other ethnicities (e.g., Hispanics). Put simply, they are aware that the playing field is not level; that is, they are aware that they will be discriminated against because of their race. In sum, we contend that the pivotal belief that solidifies and defines the worldview shared by African Americans is that the United States has been and continues to be a systematically racist society….

We argue that the social construction of the African American worldview is a dynamic, evolving process. It includes a general recognition of the historical racial struggles that African Americans have gone through along with specific accounts of successful resistance. This means that the worldview has a historical-legacy component that acts as a racial lens that sensitizes African Americans to how race and racism shape the contours of their daily lived experiences. This worldview also evolves as its history is infused with the present collective racialized lived experiences of African Americans. But, all worldviews are just broad guides. They are not explicit detailed blueprints that precisely define how all African Americans should behave across immeasurable situations. Because of this imprecision, it is possible for the African American worldview to be both an inspiration for the majority of African Americans to successfully resist their racial subordination as well as a source of beliefs that cause a minority of blacks to offend. Thus, the majority of blacks draw upon the strengths of the stories that describe how others have successfully resisted their racial subjugation…. [However,] the worldview for others causes them to be overwhelmed with the deleterious feelings associated with their awareness of how their race and racism will negatively impact their lives.

In sum, our theory contends that the worldview shared by African Americans provides the vast majority of blacks with the ability to fend off the deleterious consequences of racial subordination. However, it also provides a minority of blacks with the impetus to respond to racial subjugation with attitudes and behaviors that increase their likelihood of offending….

Racial Socialization and African American Offending

Nearly all African Americans, at some point in their lives, perceive criminal justice injustices, racial discrimination, and experience the negative consequences of being pejoratively stereotyped. We argue that these perceptions and experiences are related to African American offending because they weaken social bonds with conventional institutions and cause blacks to have heightened states of anger-defiance and depression. Yet, we also know that only a small percentage of African Americans offend. This, of course, means that the vast majority of African Americans somehow successfully negotiate the deleterious consequences of encountering racial injustices. In short, blacks are incredibly resilient (Brown, 2008; Keyes, 2009; Miller, 1999; Stevenson, Reed, Bodison, and Bishop, 1997). In fact, scholars argue that, in the absence of acknowledging this resiliency, there is a strong tendency to define African Americans in terms of the pathology associated with disproportionately living in resource-depleted neighborhoods (Nicolas, Helms, Jernigan, Sass, Skrzypek, and DeSilva, 2008). In this chapter, we argue that racial socialization experiences are a critical reason why so few African Americans respond to the damaging consequences of racial injustices by offending.

African Americans are faced with the reality of being black in a racist society. This means that they are confronted by racial discrimination, criminal justice injustices, and pejorative stereotypes that devalue them as being less than whites (Constantine and Blackmon, 2002). Scholars have revealed that many African American parents actively prepare their children to negotiate these perceptions of racial injustice (McHale, Crouter, Kim, Burton, Davis, Dotterer, and Swanson, 2006). They refer to this process as racial socialization. Lesane-Brown (2006: 400) defines racial socialization "as specific verbal and non-verbal messages transmitted to younger generations for the development of values, attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs regarding the meaning and significance of race and racial stratification, intergroup and intragroup interactions, and personal and group identity."

Ward (1996) adds that racial socialization involves passing on the knowledge needed to resist internalizing the prevailing pejorative images and evaluations of African Americans and to create a self-identity that includes blackness as positive and valued. Ward (1996: 86) states:

> As agents of socialization, black families play an essential role in orienting their children to the existing social environment, teaching them what they need to know about the world and their place in it. African American parents socialize their children based on cultural and political interpretations and assumptions derived from their lived experience of being black in white America. The parenting of a black child is a political act. The psychological survival of a black child largely depends on the black family's ability to endure racial and economic discrimination and to negotiate conflicting and multiple role demands.

Thus, scholars of racial socialization detail how African American families experience and discuss racial inequalities and injustices and how they teach their children to manage them. More specifically, research recognizes that racial socialization is a multilayered phenomenon that "includes exposure to cultural practices and objects, efforts to instill pride in and knowledge about African Americans, discussions about discrimination and how to cope with it, and strategies for succeeding in mainstream society" (Hughes, Rodriguez, Smith, Johnson, Stevenson, and Spicer, 2006: 748). Scholars argue that African American parents must racially socialize their children so that they understand: (1) African American culture and how to interact with other blacks; (2) how to get along with other racial groups; and (3) how to cope with their minority status (Lesane-Brown, 2006: 401). Other scholars add that: "Race-specific barriers might include racial concerns, such as discrimination in the classroom, racial stereotyping, and issues of subordination. Effective racial socialization enables the youths to recognize the difference between these types of barriers and to cope with them effectively" (Nicolas et al., 2008: 276). In short, racial socialization is the attempt by

African American parents to provide their children with the skills to buffer the effects of having a "collective spoiled identity" (Goffman, 1963; Inzlicht, McKay, and Aronson, 2006; Loury, 2004)....

Our basic thesis is that variations in racial socialization can exacerbate the influences that racial injustices have on the likelihood that blacks will engage in crime. We assert that there are four pathways through which racial socialization can increase the probability of individual African American offending.

First, we argue that parents who do not racially socialize their children put them at greater risk for experiencing the deleterious consequences of racial injustices that are related to offending (e.g., anger-hostility-defiance-depression and weak social bonds). Our theory posits that in the absence of parental-guardian racial socialization experiences, African American youth are more likely to construct their racial identity and their feelings about racial injustices by interacting with their peers and other individuals in their neighborhood; that is, on the "streets" (Oliver, 2006; Sharkey, 2006; Stewart and Simons, 2006; Stewart, Schreck, and Simons, 2006; Stewart and Simons, 2010). We additionally assert that it is likely, especially in disadvantaged isolated racially segregated neighborhoods, that the individuals that they will most likely interact with will be disidentified African Americans. We further hypothesize that it is likely that these disidentified individuals will have developed deep resentments toward individual whites and white-dominated institutions such as the criminal justice system. Consequently, we contend that African American youths who are not proactively and positively racially socialized by their parents will inculcate the attitudes that they are exposed to on the "streets" (Sharkey, 2006). We also hypothesize that youths who are racially socialized on the "street" are more likely to develop weak social bonds with institutions, such as their schools. Therefore, we stipulate that African Americans are more likely to offend if their "street" racial identity includes deep resentments toward racial injustices and race-based rationalizations that function to weaken their attachments to white-dominated institutions.

Second, we hypothesize that African Americans who are chronically exposed to criminal justice injustices, being pejoratively stereotyped, and racial discrimination are more likely to offend if their parents taught them, either purposefully or implicitly—verbally or nonverbally—to distrust individual whites, white-dominated institutions, and that whites hold them in contempt (Brown, Linver, and Evans, 2010). We posit that African Americans raised by parents that overly emphasize the mistrust of whites and encourage their children to become overly defiant in the presence of racism are likely to develop a stigma sensitivity and stigma consciousness. The research shows that African Americans with these sensitivities are more likely to perceive discrimination directed at them personally, interpret ambiguous situations as identity threatening, are less likely to want to prove the stereotype wrong, are more vulnerable to the toxic effects of stereotype threats, and can provide more concrete examples of instances of racial discrimination (Brown and Pinel, 2003; Inzlicht, McKay, and Aronson, 2006; Pinel, 1999). In addition, researchers have found that these heightened states of sensitivity may cause African Americans to have less self-control, a factor that is unequivocally related to offending. Thus, our theory stipulates that an overemphasis on the mistrust of whites causes African American offending because it heightens their sensitivity to recognizing racial injustices, increases their likelihood of negatively reacting to racial injustices with anger-defiance-depression-hopelessness, enhances their likelihood of engaging in impulsive behaviors, and it weakens their ability to develop strong bonds with white-dominated institutions.

Third, our theory hypothesizes that African American parents may increase their children's probability of offending if they inadequately prepare them for their encounters with racial injustices. This aspect of racial socialization is referred to as "preparation for bias." We suggest that there are two aspects of preparation for bias that may lead to higher individual rates of offending. First, African American parents may stress inappropriate responses to racial injustices, such as defiance and aggression. Second, African American parents may not provide their children with effective coping skills, such as encouraging them to seek social supports (e.g., to talk with them or other positive role

models), reporting racist acts to appropriate authorities, and affirmatively, but not angrily-aggressively, standing up to the perpetrators. In the absence of these effective resistant skills, we argue that African American youth will become more vulnerable to developing stigma sensitivity and stigma consciousness, which in turn predict higher rates of offending.

Fourth, our theory hypothesizes that certain racial socialization experiences should weaken the ability of African American youth to develop strong bonds with white-dominated institutions. More specifically, we hypothesize that African American youths will develop weak bonds with their schools or place of employment if their parents: (1) did not culturally socialize them, that is, instill within them a positive racial identity; (2) ill-prepared them for racially-biased encounters; (3) encouraged them to mistrust whites; and (4) underemphasized the teaching of egalitarian values. Note that our theory recognizes that other forms of parenting, such as authoritarianism, can exacerbate or attenuate the relationships among racial socialization practices, weak social bonds, and offending. Consequently, we hypothesize that the highest incidences of offending should occur among those African Americans who are poorly parented, have been ill-prepared by their parents to develop strong bonds with white-dominated institutions, and ill-prepared to fend off the noxious effects of racial injustices.

Our Theoretical Model of African American Offending

Below, we present a heuristic model that explicates our theory of African American offending. What separates our theory from the more general explanations of crime is that we contend that African American offending emerges from their unique worldview—that is, their peerless racialized daily experience. This unique worldview is only shared by African Americans and arose because of their inimitable racial oppression. In short, our theory of African American offending is race-centered; that is, it locates the cause of offending in the lived experiences of blacks residing in a conflicted racially stratified society—the United States.

Figure 31.1 indicates that the unique worldview shared by African Americans is reciprocally related to three core concepts of our theory: perceptions of criminal justice injustices, perceptions of racial discrimination and the effects of being negatively stereotyped, and racial socialization practices. Note that these are reciprocal relationships (i.e., two-headed arrows). This means that these three concepts are salient components of the unique worldview shared by African Americans but, at the same time, their worldview is reinforced each time an African American experiences these racial injustices and is racially socialized. For example, our theory argues that the inimitable worldview shared by African Americans causes them to engage in the racial socialization of their children while, simultaneously, the racial socialization of African American youth further reinforces and sustains their unique worldview. This same process equally unfolds for the experiences that African Americans have with criminal justice injustices and different forms of racial discrimination. In the end, African Americans have a unique worldview that is reinforced when they encounter racial injustices and are embedded in social networks that reinforce the beliefs that emerge from their lived experiences with racial subordination.

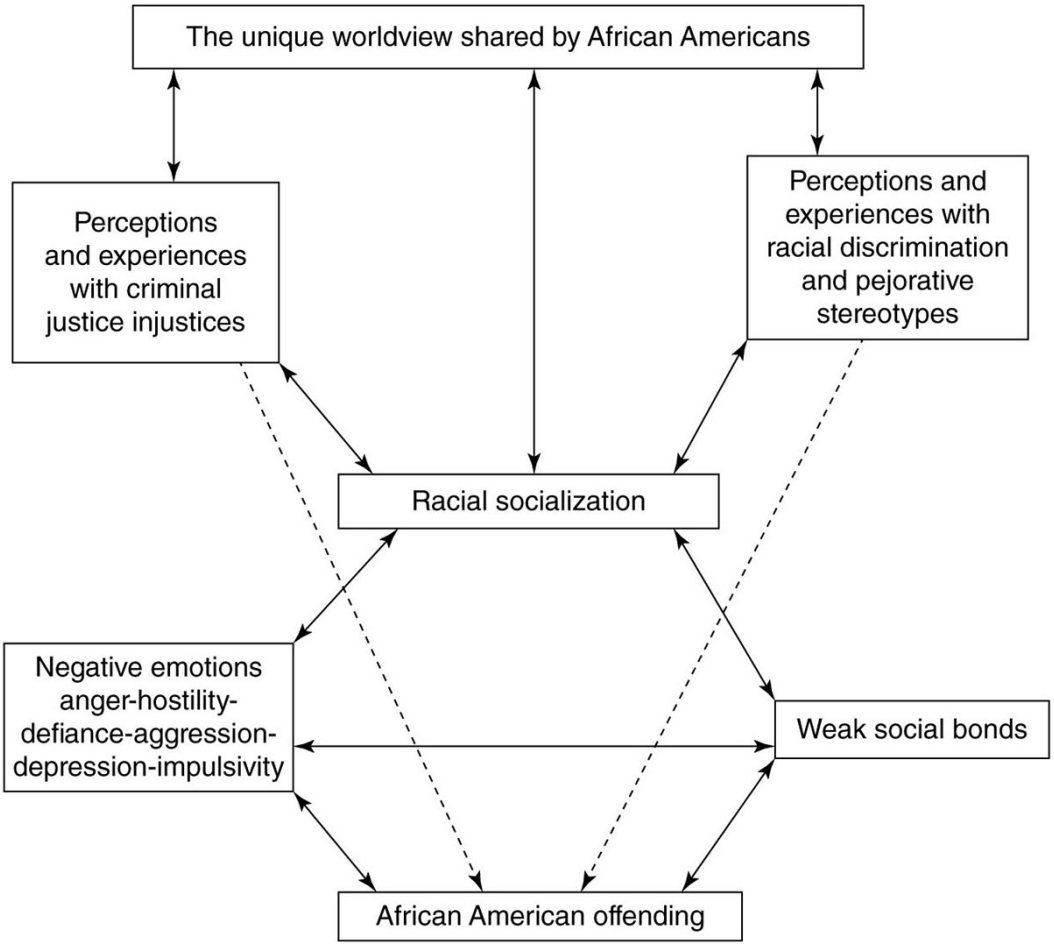

The unique worldview shared by African Americans
Perceptions and experiences with criminal justice injustices
Perceptions and experiences with racial discrimination and pejorative stereotypes
Racial socialization
Negative emotions anger-hostility-defiance-aggression-depression-impulsivity
Weak social bonds
African American offending

FIGURE 31.1 Our Theory of African American Offending

Figure 31.1 highlights the importance that we assign to racial socialization experiences as we assert that it is the key factor that mediates the effects of criminal justice injustices, racial discrimination, and being noxiously stereotyped on whether African Americans express injurious negative emotions and develop weak bonds, which in turn directly impact offending. Thus, the model indicates that, as a result of experiencing racial injustices, inadequate racial socialization experiences will increase the likelihood that African Americans will express negative emotions and develop weak social bonds. Note that there are reciprocal arrows between racial socialization and perceptions and experiences with both criminal justice injustices and racial discrimination-pejorative stereotypes. Our model stipulates that some African Americans are racially socialized to be more vigilant in perceiving both of these racial injustices and, therefore, are more likely to react to these injustices with negative emotions and will have less ability to develop strong bonds with institutions. Our model also allows for there to be "child-effects" (Keijsers, Branje, VanderValk, and Meeus, 2010; Zadeh, Jenkins, and Pepler, 2010). These transactional child-effects are represented by the reciprocal causal arrows between racial socialization and both negative emotions and weak social bonds. These reciprocal relationships model the likelihood that African American parents will alter their racial socialization practices based on whether their children are overly expressing negative emotions or are having trouble developing strong bonds with conventional institutions.

Figure 31.1 reveals that the African Americans who are the least likely to offend are those that peripherally perceive criminal justice injustices, racial discrimination, and being negatively stereotyped and experience positive racial socialization practices that provide them with the ability to cope with their encounters with racial injustices by engaging in prosocial behaviors (e.g., reporting the perpetrator of racist acts to the appropriate authorities). It

further indicates that African Americans who are unlikely to offend are those whose parents inculcated them with the ability to develop strong bonds with white-dominated institutions, even if they personally perceive them to be racist.

Our model indicates that the African Americans who are most likely to offend are those that intensely perceive or experience criminal justice injustices, racial discrimination, and being derogatorily stereotyped, and experience racial socialization practices over time that increase their likelihood of developing weak bonds with institutions, such as with their schools and places of employment, and are socialized to react to racial injustices with negative emotions (i.e., anger-hostility-defiance-aggression-depression-impulsivity). Figure 31.1 additionally indicates that there is a reciprocal relationship between the negative emotions that flow from racial injustices and developing weak bonds with conventional institutions. Our model predicts that African Americans who manifest negative emotions—anger-defiance-depression—will be more likely to develop weak bonds and that blacks who are unable to bond to white-dominated institutions will be more likely to express anger-defiance-depression. Note that Figure 31.1 also has two broken-line causal arrows. These indicate that it is possible for criminal justice injustices, racial discrimination, and being pejoratively stereotyped to directly impact offending. We argue that these direct relationships occur when these experiences are so intense that they overwhelm positive prosocial racial socialization experiences.

Finally, our model includes reciprocal arrows between African American offending and negative emotions and weak bonds. These arrows indicate that African Americans are more likely to offend if they express negative emotions and have weak social bonds. They also indicate that African Americans who offend are likely to have encounters with the criminal justice system that will cause their feelings of hostility-defiance-depression to intensify and to develop even weaker social bonds with conventional institutions as they become disenfranchised because of their arrest record (Alexander, 2010). Our theory posits that these more intense feelings and weaker social bonds increase the probability that African American offenders will have further encounters across their lifespan with the criminal justice system.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between a general theory of crime and a racially specific theory of crime? Which kind of theory have Unnever and Gabbidon set forth?
2. Do you think that criminology needs a separate theory of African American offending? If so, why? If not, why not?
3. What is racial socialization? When you were growing up, did you think much about your race and how to interact with those in other groups? How might racial socialization differ for African Americans and whites? How might the kind of racial socialization a youngster receives be a risk factor for offending—from street crimes to hate crimes?
4. How might Unnever and Gabbidon's theory of African American offending be placed within the framework of general strain theory?

SECTION 3

CHOICE, OPPORTUNITY, AND CRIME

Francis T. Cullen
University of Cincinnati

Robert Agnew
Emory University

Pamela Wilcox
Pennsylvania State University

PART X

REVIVING CLASSICAL THEORY: DETERRENCE AND RATIONAL CHOICE THEORIES

Francis T. Cullen
University of Cincinnati

Robert Agnew
Emory University

Pamela Wilcox
Pennsylvania State University

Most of the theories presented in the previous chapters focus on the factors that constrain individuals to engage in crime—factors like individual traits, disorganized communities, association with delinquent peers, and strains. The impression one gets from reading these chapters is that crime is largely the result of forces beyond an individual's control. Individuals do not choose to engage in crime, but rather their criminal behavior is determined by a variety of individual and social factors. This "deterministic" view of crime has dominated crime theory since the late 1800s. It stands in contrast to "classical theory," which dominated crime theory during the late 1700s and much of the 1800s.

According to classical theory, individuals choose to engage in crime based on a rational consideration of the costs and benefits associated with crime (see Part I for an overview). That is, individuals engage in crime when they believe that crime maximizes their net benefits (i.e., their benefits minus costs). This fundamental idea has been revived and extended in the work of several economists and criminologists, and it now once again occupies a central place in crime theory.

Deterrence Theory

Deterrence theory most fully reflects the ideas of classical theory. Deterrence theorists argue that people are rational and pursue their own interests, attempting to maximize their pleasure and minimize their pain. They choose to engage in crime if they believe it is to their advantage. The best way to prevent crime, therefore, is through punishments that are swift, certain, and appropriately severe. Deterrence theorists, like classical theorists, focus primarily on the impact of official punishments on crime. Deterrence occurs when "someone refrains from committing a crime because he or she fears the certainty, swiftness, and/or severity of formal legal punishment" (Paternoster and Bachman, 2001: 14). Note that these ideas are almost identical to those advanced by Beccaria (see Chapter 1), the first and most prominent of the classical theorists.

Deterrence theory became popular in the 1970s, stimulated in part by the work of Gary Becker (1968). And, since that time, the theory has had an enormous impact on contemporary crime control policies. In particular, the criminal justice system in the United States largely abandoned rehabilitation as its main crime control strategy throughout the 1980s and 1990s and instead tried to control crime by increasing the certainty and especially the severity of punishment (Cullen et al., 2002; Page, 2011). For example, many states passed "three strikes and you're out" laws, which typically impose life sentences on individuals on their third conviction for certain crimes. Most states also made it easier to try certain serious juvenile offenders in adult court, where the penalties are generally more severe than those in juvenile court. This shift in focus was reflected in the fact that the rate of imprisonment in the United States increased about fivefold from the early 1970s to the early 2000s, with the United States now having the highest rate of imprisonment in the world.

It has only been in the most recent few years that we have seen any easing of the boom in imprisonment. The economic downturn, starting in 2008, forced states to revisit punitive policies. Quite simply, enacting deterrence policies had become financially unfeasible for many states. Additionally, research has suggested that achieving deterrence through punishment is more complex than simply increasing the severity of sentences (see below). For these reasons, deterrence-based strategies, while still quite popular, are sharing space in the realm of criminal justice with numerous less punitive and less expensive sentencing alternatives.

Specific Deterrence

Deterrence theory makes a distinction between two types of deterrence: specific and general. Specific deterrence refers to the idea that punishment reduces the crime *of those specific people who are punished*. So, punishing someone for a crime should reduce the likelihood of further crime by that person.

Is there any evidence for specific deterrence? A number of studies have tried to determine whether increasing the *severity* of punishment reduces crime. Most data suggest that more severe punishments are no more effective at reducing crime than less severe punishments. In fact, some studies suggest that more severe punishments may increase the likelihood of subsequent crime. So administering more severe punishments to people does not appear to reduce their subsequent crime (Agnew, 2009; Cullen et al., 1996; Kovandzic et al., 2004; Sherman et al., 1997; for review, see Chalfin and McCrary, 2017; Paternoster and Bachman, 2013).

A few studies have tried to determine whether the swiftness or *celerity* of punishment affects crime. Psychological studies on animals suggest that swift punishments are more effective at suppressing behavior than delayed punishments. The few studies on humans, however, suggest that swift punishments do not reduce subsequent offending more than delayed punishments, perhaps because humans "have a far greater cognitive capacity than do animals for connecting acts with temporally remote consequences" (Nagin and Pogarsky, 2001: 867). That said, research indicates that certainty and celerity in combination may deter crime. Specifically, the 24/7 Sobriety program is a DUI intervention that orders abstention and then combines sanction certainty (through frequent monitoring of substance use) and celerity (a rapidly applied modest jail sentence for noncompliance). Evaluations of program impact indicate that it significantly reduces repeat DUI arrests (Kilmer et al., 2013; Kilmer and Midgette, 2020).

Additionally, a few studies have tried to determine whether people *punished* by the justice system are less likely to engage in crime than comparable people who are *not punished*. These studies typically compare arrested or convicted people to comparable people who have not been arrested or convicted. The two groups are usually comparable in terms of the offenses they have committed and such sociodemographic characteristics as age, sex, race, and class, although they may differ in other ways that are not considered. The results of these studies are

mixed, but they tend to suggest that the arrested/convicted people do *not* have lower rates of subsequent crime. Some studies, in fact, find that the arrested people have *higher* rates of subsequent crime (e.g., Huizinga et al., 2003; see Agnew, 2009; Bernburg et al., 2006; Pogarsky and Piquero, 2003, for reviews). So, overall, we may tentatively conclude that punishing people often does not reduce their subsequent crime.

There are several possible reasons that punishing people may not deter them from committing further crime (see Agnew, 2009; Tonry, 2008). First, many offenders may not be that rational. As will be shown in Part XII, offenders are often impulsive and high in negative emotionality. And as indicated in Parts II through IX, many offenders are often pressured into crime, perhaps by the strains they experience or their association with delinquent peers. As a consequence, many offenders may not be deterred by the threat of further punishment. Second, punishment may sometimes increase strains, reduce social control, and increase the social learning of crime (see Part VI on labeling theory for a fuller discussion). For example, individuals with criminal records may have more trouble finding legitimate work, thus increasing their strain and reducing their social control. Third, the justice system does not punish in an effective way. In particular, the likelihood of punishment is very low, which may undermine the deterrent effect of punishment, since it must be certain if it is to be effective. In this area, some studies suggest that punished individuals do *not* increase their estimates of the certainty of punishment and may even lower them (see Pogarsky et al., 2004, 2005; Pogarsky and Piquero, 2003).

Some criminologists, however, argue that the effect of punishment on crime depends on the nature of the punishment and who is punished. So, although punished offenders *as a whole* may not reduce their subsequent crime, it may be that *some* punished offenders reduce their crime and other punished offenders increase their crime. Deterrence researchers are now conducting much research in this area. Certain of this research focuses on the nature of punishments. Most notably, Braithwaite (Chapter 19) argues that some punishments are administered in ways that isolate or alienate offenders from society. In particular, punished individuals are labeled as bad or evil people, rejected by conventional others, and often treated in a harsh manner. Not surprisingly, these punishments are said to increase the likelihood of further crime. In other cases, punishments are followed by an effort to forgive the offender and reintegrate him or her back into conventional society. Some evidence suggests that these punishments are more likely to reduce at least certain types of crime (Bonta et al., 2006; Braithwaite, 1989, 2002; Braithwaite et al., 2006; McGarrell and Hipple, 2007). Sherman (1993) makes a similar argument and states that the effect of punishments on subsequent crime depends on the extent to which the punishments are administered in a fair and respectful manner. Studies also provide some support for this argument (Fagan and Piquero, 2007; Paternoster et al., 1997; Sherman, 1993; Sherman et al., 1992; see also Piquero et al., 2004).

Other research focuses on the characteristics of the people who are punished. Some criminologists argue that punishments are most likely to reduce crime among those who are strongly committed to conformity, especially those who are high in self-control and strongly bonded to conventional society. Individuals who are high in self-control care about and give much thought to the consequences of their behavior, so punishments should be more likely to deter them (see Chapter 17). Individuals with strong bonds have good jobs and close ties to family members, and believe that crime is wrong (see Chapter 16). Punishments should be more likely to deter them since they have much to lose if they engage in further crime. In this area, punishments are said to be especially likely to have a deterrent effect on white-collar criminals—who tend to be higher in self-control and to have more to lose through crime (Pratt et al., 2006; although see Weisburd et al., 1995).

Other criminologists, however, disagree with these arguments. They claim that individuals who are strongly committed to conformity are likely to refrain from crime regardless of whether they are punished. Punishment, then, should have little effect on their future offending. Instead, punishments should be most likely to reduce crime among those who are strongly disposed to crime, including those who are low in self-control and have weak bonds to

conventional society. It is said that punishment is the only thing holding these individuals back from crime. Several studies support this idea, suggesting that punishments are most likely to deter crime among those who are strongly disposed to crime (Pogarsky, 2007; Thomas et al., 2013; Tittle and Botchkovar, 2005; Wright et al., 2004).

Finally, some criminologists propose a compromise, claiming that punishments are most likely to reduce crime among those who are neither strongly committed to crime or conformity. Although such individuals have *some* inclination to engage in crime, they are not so strongly committed to crime that they are unresponsive to punishments. Studies have produced some support for each of the above arguments (e.g., Bachman et al., 1992; Foglia, 1997; Nagin, 1998; Pogarsky, 2002, 2007; Sherman, 1993; Wikström, 2008; Wooldredge and Thistlethwaite, 2002; Wright et al., 2004).

For now, we can draw the following tentative conclusion: *Overall*, when the justice system punishes people or punishes them more severely, that does not reduce their subsequent crime. It is probably the case, however, that *some* people reduce their crime in response to punishment and *some* people increase their crime in response to punishment. Current research is now examining those factors that influence the effect of punishment. Such research is, of course, very important, since it may help us design punishments that are effective in controlling crime.

General Deterrence

Studies on specific deterrence ask whether punishment deters crime among *those who are punished*. Studies on general deterrence ask whether punishment deters crime among people *in the general population*. In particular, it has been argued that punishment may deter crime among those who are not punished. For example, suppose several people are caught for shoplifting and are punished. Their punishment may deter *others* from shoplifting—even though these others were not punished. These others may come to feel that they too might be caught and punished if they shoplift.

Numerous studies have tried to determine whether there is a general deterrent effect—that is, whether increasing the certainty and severity of punishment reduces crime in the general population. Some studies compare areas that differ in terms of the certainty or severity of punishment. Usually states are compared, but sometimes cities or counties are compared. Certainty of punishment is usually measured in terms of the average number of arrests per officer or the arrest rate (the proportion of offenses known to the police that result in arrest). Severity is often measured in terms of the average length of prison sentence served for various crimes. These studies try to determine whether areas with a higher certainty and severity of punishment have lower crime rates. Other studies have examined whether the certainty and severity of punishment at one point in time affects crime rates at a *subsequent* point in time. For example, they may examine whether areas with a relatively high certainty and severity of punishment are more likely to experience a reduction in crime than other areas. Or they may examine the effect of policies designed to increase the certainty and severity of punishment. For example, several studies have examined the effectiveness of policies designed to crack down on drunk driving and drug sales. Other studies have examined the effect of hiring additional police or placing more police in high-crime areas or "hot spots" for crime (e.g., Braga et al., 2008; Cohen et al., 2003; Levitt, 2002; Nagin et al., 2015; Sherman and Weisburd, 1995; Telep et al., 2014; Weisburd et al., 2015, 2017; Zimring, 2012).

These studies have been criticized, however. Criminologists argue that they assume that people are aware of the certainty and severity of punishment in the area where they live. But data suggest that this assumption is often wrong. Many people have little idea of the true certainty and severity of punishment (see Kleck and Barnes, 2013, 2014; Pickett and Roche, 2016; Kleck et al., 2005). In particular, people who are law-abiding often greatly overestimate the certainty and severity of punishment (Nagin, 1998). Given this fact, some criminologists argue that

the best way to determine whether people are deterred by the threat of punishment is to ask them to estimate the certainty and severity of punishment—in particular, to estimate the likelihood that they will be punished if they commit a particular offense and what their punishment will be. If people are deterred by the threat of punishment, their estimate of the certainty and severity of punishment should have an effect on their level of crime. In particular, people who state that they will be caught and severely punished if they engage in crime should be less likely to engage in crime.

Thus, a range of studies have attempted to determine whether the certainty and severity of punishment are related to crime in the general population. The results of these studies do not always agree with one another, but if we look at the best research there are a few tentative conclusions we can draw (see Agnew, 2009; Levitt, 2002; Matsueda et al., 2006; Nagin, 1998; Paternoster and Bachman, 2001; Pratt et al., 2006; Tonry, 2008; Wikström, 2008 for overviews). Most notably, increasing the *certainty* of punishment may reduce crime by a moderate amount in some circumstances. The certainty of punishment, however, is only one of many factors influencing the level of crime. It is less important than other factors, such as the individual's beliefs regarding crime and the threat of informal punishment from family members and others. The severity of punishment is less important than the certainty of punishment, with most studies suggesting that changes in the severity of punishment have little or no effect on crime (although see Pogarsky, 2002, 2007).

As indicated, the certainty of punishment reduces crime in *some* circumstances. Limited research suggests that the effect of punishment is short-lived and is confined to the specific area in which the punishment is administered (but see Weisburd et al., 2017). So, punishments administered a year ago have little or no effect on current levels of crime (likewise, the individual's perception of the certainty of punishment a year ago often has little effect on his or her current crime). And punishments administered outside of one's community appear to have little deterrent effect. This makes sense: People are most responsive to recent punishments administered in their communities. And it jibes with recent research indicating that perceptions of the certainty of punishment are partly based on the experiences of people in one's immediate environment, such as family members, friends, neighbors, and coworkers. Further, some data suggest that punishments must be reasonably certain if offenders are to be deterred. A few studies estimate that the probability of punishment needs to be 20% or more if offenders are to be deterred—although more research is needed in this area (see Agnew, 2009).

Also, there is some evidence that the threat of punishment is more likely to deter some people than others. The arguments made in this area are similar to those made with respect to specific deterrence, thus producing contradictory results. Some studies suggest that the threat of punishment is most likely to deter those who are strongly committed to crime, such as those who are low in self-control, whereas other studies indicate that traits such as self-control and honesty-humility are associated with greater perceived sanction risk (e.g., Pickett and Bushway, 2015; van Gelder and de Vries, 2012, 2014).

In sum, there is great nuance when it comes to general deterrence; it may work with certain people in some circumstances. In this area, several programs have been successful in deterring crime among people disposed to crime, such as gang members, probationers, and those who congregate in high-crime locations or "hot spots" (Braga et al., 2008; Engel et al., 2013; McGarrell et al., 2006; Telep and Weisburd, 2012; Weisburd et al., 2008). These "focused deterrence" programs have certain important features. They clearly communicate to such people that the certainty (and often severity) of punishment has increased. This communication may be direct, as when the police meet with gang members and tell them that they are being closely watched and will be sanctioned if they offend. It may also be indirect, as when the police dramatically increase the extent to which they patrol crime "hot spots." Such communication is critical, since increasing the certainty of punishment will not deter offending unless individuals are aware of the increase (see Kleck et al., 2005). These programs also closely monitor the offending behavior of

those in the target group and consistently sanction infractions. Such sanctions are sometimes publicized to reinforce the message that the certainty of punishment has increased. Such programs, of course, are possible only when the police can identify, communicate with, and effectively monitor individuals who are disposed to crime.

Stafford and Warr's Reconceptualization of Deterrence Theory

A classic paper by Stafford and Warr has caused many deterrence theorists to rethink the sharp distinction between specific and general deterrence. Stafford and Warr begin their paper, reprinted in Chapter 32, by stating that deterrence researchers usually focus on either specific deterrence *or* general deterrence. If they focus on specific deterrence, they examine the impact of "an offender's direct experience with suffering a punishment" (Stafford and Warr, 1993: 126). If they focus on general deterrence, they examine the effect of *indirect experiences* with punishment (i.e., one's knowledge of the punishment of others). Further, such researchers show little concern with experiences of punishment *avoidance*. In particular, they do not ask whether individuals have committed crimes for which they have not been punished or whether they are aware of others who have committed crimes for which they have not been punished.

Stafford and Warr argue these are serious shortcomings. If we want to determine whether punishment deters crime, we need to recognize that "people are likely to have a *mixture* of indirect and direct experience with punishment and punishment avoidance" (1993: 126). In particular, studies on deterrence need to examine whether individuals: (1) have been punished for any crimes they have committed (direct experiences with punishment), (2) are aware of others who have been punished for their crimes (indirect experiences with punishment), (3) have avoided punishment for crimes they have committed (direct experiences with punishment avoidance), and (4) are aware of others who have avoided punishment for their crimes (indirect experiences with punishment avoidance). Estimates of the certainty and severity of punishment should be affected by all of these factors.

Studies on deterrence fail to consider all of these factors. Studies on specific deterrence, for example, usually just examine whether individuals have direct experiences with punishment. They seldom inquire about direct experiences with punishment avoidance or indirect experiences with punishment and punishment avoidance. Studies on general deterrence just focus on indirect experiences with punishment. So, Stafford and Warr make a fundamental contribution to the deterrence literature, pointing out that the same people may have both direct and indirect experiences with punishment and that it is also important to consider punishment avoidance when testing deterrence theory.

Their reconceptualization of deterrence theory has not been extensively tested, primarily because the data necessary to fully test the theory are not available. Nevertheless, preliminary tests of the theory have been generally supportive, indicating that both direct and indirect experiences with punishment and punishment avoidance influence the perceived certainty of punishment and levels of offending. However, these effects are not always in the direction that Stafford and Warr predict. Most notably, some data suggest that—contrary to deterrence theory—direct experiences with punishment often decrease the perceived certainty of punishment and increase the likelihood of subsequent offending (Paternoster and Piquero, 1995; Piquero and Paternoster, 1998; Piquero and Pogarsky, 2002; Pogarsky and Piquero, 2003; Pogarsky et al., 2004, 2005; Sitren and Applegate, 2007). This issue is discussed further in Part VI on labeling theory.

Nevertheless, Stafford and Warr have caused researchers to rethink the sharp distinction between specific and general deterrence. Also, they have helped focus attention on an important but neglected issue regarding deterrence. Specifically, while research supports a link between the perceived certainty of punishment and the likelihood of crime, that relationship is somewhat ambiguous, and research is only beginning to shed light on the factors

associated with punishments that influence perceptions of certainty (see Kleck et al., 2005; Loughran et al., 2011; Nagin, 1998; Paternoster and Bachman, 2013). This is a major shortcoming, because such research might help policymakers design programs that would more consistently increase the perceived certainty of punishment (and thereby reduce offending). Stafford and Warr, as indicated, argue that perceptions of certainty are a function of the individual's direct and indirect experiences with punishment and punishment avoidance. Researchers, however, are also discovering that a range of other factors affect perceptions of certainty. For example, perceptions of certainty are lower among those who are low in self-control, hold beliefs favorable to crime, associate with delinquent peers, and are male (e.g., Paternoster and Bachman, 2013; Piquero and Pogarsky, 2002; Pogarsky et al., 2004, 2005).

It should be noted that much of the recent research on deterrence involves the integration of deterrence theory with other theories of crime, such as control and learning theories. These other theories help deterrence theorists better specify those factors that influence perceptions of the certainty of punishment and that influence the effect of such perceptions on crime.

Rational Choice Theory

Like classical and deterrence theories, rational choice theory assumes that offenders are rational people who seek to maximize their pleasure and minimize their pain (see the excellent overviews in Matsueda et al., 2006; McCarthy, 2002; Piquero and Tibbetts, 2002). In fact, the leading proponents of rational choice theory, Ronald V. Clarke and Derek B. Cornish, state that rational choice theory's

> focus on offenders as rational decision makers calculating where their self-interest lies, and pursuing it, puts it squarely in the classical tradition as developed by Beccaria in the eighteenth century. (2001: 24)

Clarke and Cornish developed their version of rational choice theory in the mid-1980s (Clarke and Cornish, 1985; Cornish and Clarke, 1986), and it has come to have a major impact on our efforts to understand and control crime. Although their theory shares much in common with classical and deterrence theories, it builds on these theories in several important ways.

Clarke and Cornish take care to state that they do *not* assume that people are perfectly rational, carefully calculating and weighing the expected benefits and costs of potential crimes. Rather, they assume that

> offenders seek to benefit themselves by their criminal behavior; that this involves the making of decisions and of choices, however rudimentary on occasion these processes might be; and that these processes exhibit a measure of rationality, albeit constrained by limits of time and ability and the availability of relevant information. (Cornish and Clarke, 1986: 1)

This "limited" or "bounded" rationality, then, involves some consideration of costs and benefits, although such consideration may be hurried and based on incomplete or inaccurate information.

Further, Clarke and Cornish define the costs of crime quite broadly. These costs include both formal and informal sanctions (e.g., the disapproval of parents) and "moral costs"—such as the guilt and shame one may experience from breaking the law. Classical and deterrence theories, by contrast, assume that the costs of crime are largely a function of formal sanctions. Rational choice theorists also recognize that people differ in their estimation of the benefits of crime—with some seeing the benefits as quite high. Such benefits include a range of things, such as money, status, and thrills/excitement. Classical and deterrence theories devote little attention to benefits of crime, often because they assume that the benefits are similar for most people.

Finally, rational choice theorists recognize that a range of factors influence individuals' estimates of the costs and benefits of crime. Rational choice theorists draw heavily on existing theories of crime when identifying such factors (see Figure 33.1 in Chapter 33 by Cornish and Clarke). And studies have confirmed that the estimated costs and benefits of crime are influenced by such factors as the individual's level of self-control, moral beliefs, strains, emotional state, and association with delinquent peers (e.g., Bouffard, 2002; Carmichael and Piquero, 2004; Exum, 2002; Fagan and Piquero, 2007; Matsueda et al., 2006; McCarthy, 1995; Piquero and Paternoster, 1998; van Gelder and de Vries, 2012, 2014). For example, Nagin and Paternoster (1994) found that individuals who are low in self-control are more likely to estimate the costs of crime as low and the benefits as high (see also Piquero and Tibetts, 1996). Other research by Pogarsky and colleagues (2017: 100) explored whether "situational factors that influence an individual's feelings (or 'affect pool') toward a criminal behavior may, in turn, impact his or her intuitive judgments of its risks and benefits." Pogarsky et al. (2017) conducted an experiment in which survey subjects estimated the risk of getting pulled over by police for texting while driving (TWD). But the researchers manipulated the conditions under which subjects reported the perceived risk of getting pulled over by providing different information to the various groups of subjects prior to questioning them about risk of apprehension. One group of subjects received "negative information" prior to reporting their perceived risk. Specifically, they were told that a new study showed that TWD was a leading cause of teen deaths. A second group of subjects received neutral information prior to reporting their perceived risk of apprehension for TWD—they were told that a new study showed that most cellphone users text daily. A final group was given positive information prior to reporting perceived risk of TWD; this group was told that a recent study had reported that couples who text regularly stay together. Pogarsky et al. (2017) found that the perceived risk of getting pulled over for TWD were highest among research subjects who received negative information (i.e., information that linked TWD to death) prior to reporting perceived risk, while perceived risk was lowest among those who received positive news instead (i.e., information linking TWD to relationship quality/duration).

Rational choice theory, then, is much broader than classical and deterrence theory. Rational choice theory recognizes that individuals are not fully rational—although it states that individuals do take some account of the costs and benefits of crime, it defines these costs and benefits quite broadly, and it recognizes that a range of factors influence individuals' estimates of these costs and benefits.

Several scholars, however, have challenged rational choice theory. They claim that some data suggest that offenders often commit crimes with little planning and little consideration for costs and benefits (see Benson and Sams, 2013; Birkbeck and LaFree, 1993; Carmichael and Piquero, 2004; Clarke and Cornish, 2001; Clarke and Felson, 1993; Cornish and Clarke, 1986; Exum, 2002; Meier and Miethe, 1993; Newman et al., 1997; Pogarsky, 2002; Tittle, 1995; Tunnel, 2002). Rather, they act impulsively, they act under the influence of alcohol and drugs, or they act under pressure from others. Further, their criminal acts do not appear to be in their self-interest. Rational choice theorists respond by arguing that they use a very broad definition of rationality and that with careful examination, crimes that seem impulsive or coerced often reveal some consideration for costs and benefits. And crimes that seem to work against the self-interest of the offender often carry benefits, although such benefits may be intangible, such as status or thrills and excitement.

The data provide some support for rational choice theory. A number of studies have examined whether people's estimates of the costs and benefits of crime influence their levels of offending (or their intentions to offend). Such studies have examined both the formal and informal costs of crime. In particular, they have examined the perceived likelihood that crime will result in official sanction, condemnation by family and friends, feelings of guilt and shame, physical harm, and economic problems. And such studies have examined a range of benefits, including the perceived likelihood that crime will result in monetary benefits, thrills/excitement, and status. Most studies find that crime is more likely when its costs are seen as low and its benefits as high (e.g., Bachman et al. 1992; Fagan and Piquero,

2007; Matsueda et al., 2006; McCarthy, 1995, 2002; McCarthy and Hagan, 2005; Nagin and Paternoster, 1994; Pratt et al., 2006; Paternoster and Bachman, 2001; Piquero and Tibbetts, 2002; Tittle and Botchkovar, 2005; Ward et al., 2006). However, there is some evidence that individuals are less likely to be influenced by the perceived costs and benefits of crime when they are intoxicated or angry (Assaad and Exum, 2002; Carmichael and Piquero, 2004; Exum, 2002). Also, crime is not simply a function of its perceived costs and benefits. Other factors, such as level of self-control, have a substantial impact on crime—even after we take account of the perceived costs and benefits of crime (e.g., Bachman et al., 1992; Nagin and Paternoster, 1994; Piquero and Paternoster, 1998; Piquero and Tibbetts, 1996).

The rational choice perspective appears to be rather different from the theories we have examined so far. These theories focus on the factors that constrain individuals to engage in crime, while the rational choice perspective argues that individuals frequently choose to engage in crime based on a consideration of costs and benefits. Certain theorists, however, have argued that the rational choice perspective is not really that different from existing crime theories (e.g., Akers, 1990). While rational choice theorists focus on choice, they devote much attention to the factors that constrain choice. These factors include variables from the leading crime theories, such as individual traits, attitudes toward crime, and the extent to which individuals have been reinforced and punished for crime (see the selection by Cornish and Clarke in Chapter 33). Further, the leading crime theories do not deny that individuals choose to engage in crime. They simply focus on those factors that constrain individual choice. These factors typically have to do with the benefits and costs of crime. This is most obviously the case with respect to social learning theory (see the Akers selection in Chapter 9), which explicitly focuses on the expected reinforcements (benefits) and punishments (costs) associated with crime. Akers (1990), in fact, has argued that rational choice theory is easily subsumed by his social learning theory.

Rational choice theory, then, is not as different from the leading crime theories as it might first appear. The theory, in fact, may be viewed as a form of integrated theory because it draws on the leading crime theories in order to more fully specify the costs and benefits associated with crime (see Figure 33.1 in the Cornish and Clarke selection). At the same time, rational choice theory has advanced our understanding of crime in several important ways.

Rational choice theorists argue that a complete explanation of crime must distinguish between “criminal involvement” and “criminal events.” Criminal involvement deals with the decision to become involved in crime (as well as to continue in crime and to desist from crime). Criminal events deal with the decision to commit specific criminal acts. Most crime theories focus on the decision to become involved in crime but do not deal with the factors influencing the decision to commit a particular crime. These factors often have to do with the immediate circumstances and situation of the individual. Rational choice theory has directed much attention to these circumstances and situations and has thereby supplemented the approach of the leading crime theories. Much of the research stimulated by rational choice theory, in fact, focuses on the factors that offenders consider when they are thinking about committing a particular crime.

Rational choice theorists also argue that it is necessary to adopt a “crime-specific focus” when examining crime. That is, we should focus on particular types of crime, such as residential burglaries committed in middle-class suburbs, rather than examining all crimes together. This is because the costs and benefits associated with different types of crime may differ, particularly at the situational level. So, while the rational choice perspective may not be that different from the leading crime theories, it has moved us beyond these theories in important ways (see Clarke and Cornish, 2001; Cornish, 1993).

Rational choice theory has inspired a fair amount of research on the situational determinants of specific crimes, much of which is compatible with the broad view of rationality described above (see Bernasco and Block, 2009; Clarke and Cornish, 2001; Nagin and Paternoster, 1994; Newman et al., 1997; Piquero and Tibbetts, 2002; Tunnel,

1992; Wright and Decker, 1994, 1997; Wright and Topalli, 2013). Burglars, for example, often target unoccupied homes that can be easily entered with little risk of being seen by others (Wright and Decker, 1994). And rational choice theory has stimulated the development of a number of situationally based crime prevention efforts that attempt to reduce the perceived benefits and increase the perceived costs of crime. Examples include steering locks on cars, removable car radios, and the use of cameras to detect people who do not stop at red traffic signals (Center for Problem-Oriented Policing, n.d.; Clarke, 1997; Clarke and Cornish, 2001; Clarke and Eck, 2005; Eck, 2002; Felson, 2002; Newman et al., 1997; Sherman et al., 1997). Many such efforts appear to be quite successful.

Putting Theory to Work: Guiding Crime Control Policy

Criminologists have long developed their theories in the hope that they would allow us to better control crime. In fact, many of the criminologists whose writings appear in this book have discussed the crime control implications of their theories in detail (see especially Barlow and Decker, 2010). Further, certain of these criminologists have had much success in influencing crime control policy. This is the case with Beccaria (see Chapter 1), whose work fundamentally altered Western legal systems and inspired our current deterrence-based efforts to "get tough" on crime.

Get Tough Policing

Beginning in the early 1970s and continuing until recently, the crime control strategies of rehabilitation and prevention were deemphasized. Instead, the focus shifted to increasing the certainty and, especially, the severity of punishment. For example, in their now-famous essay, "Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety" (Chapter 34 in this part), James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling suggest that the solution to crime is not social reform of impoverished communities but rather the use of the criminal justice system—in this case, the police—to exert more control over individuals who otherwise would choose to do bothersome and bad things. Their central premise is that *unchecked social disorder or public incivility is the cause of serious crime*. Thus, they contend that "at the community level, disorder and crime are usually inextricably linked, in a kind of developmental sequence" (1982: 31). This sequence involves three stages.

First, the spiral of decline begins when "disorderly people" are allowed to take over public spaces (p. 30). Wilson and Kelling (1982: 30) note that these individuals are "not violent people, nor, necessarily, criminals, but disreputable or obstreperous or unpredictable people: panhandlers, drunks, addicts, rowdy teenagers, prostitutes, loiterers, the mentally disturbed." Although the risk of criminal victimization is not high, residents no longer feel comfortable simply strolling down the street. They are at risk of being hassled for money or by catcalls, of having to cross the street to avoid these disreputable people, and of seeing the signs of incivility—litter, broken bottles, graffiti, loud music.

Second, Wilson and Kelling (1982) observe that in response to this growing social and physical disorder, decent people become fearful and change their behavior accordingly—first by retreating to the safety of their residences and then, if able, by moving out of the neighborhood. This withdrawal from public spaces, however, leads to the "breakdown of community controls" (p. 31). Whereas once the neighborhood was filled with families who cared "for their homes, mind[ed] each other's children, and confidently frown[ed] on unwanted intruders," now wayward behavior is left "untended" (p. 31):

> A piece of property is abandoned, weeds grow up, a window is smashed. Adults stop scolding rowdy children; the children, emboldened, become more rowdy. Families move out, unattached adults move in. Teenagers gather in front of the corner store. The merchant asks them to move; they refuse. Fights occur. Litter accumulates. People start drinking in front of the grocery; in time, an inebriate slumps to the sidewalk and is allowed to sleep it off. Pedestrians are approached by panhandlers. (Wilson and Kelling, 1982: 32)

Third, this escalating disorder sends the message that "no one cares" about how people behave in the community (p. 31). At this point, contend Wilson and Kelling, the "area is vulnerable to criminal invasion" (p. 32). After all, to the extent that offenders are rational, they will migrate to those neighborhoods where they can engage in crime virtually with impunity—with little fear of being reported to law enforcement by residents or of being detected by police who arrive long after offenders have fled the scene of their crime.

The genius of Wilson and Kelling was in capturing the core of their theory with the "broken windows" metaphor—a comparison that resonated with diverse audiences. Communities, they claimed, were like houses:

> Social psychologists and police officers tend to agree that if a window in a building is broken *and is left unrepaired*, all the rest of the windows will soon be broken.... [O]ne unrepaired broken window is a signal that no one cares, and so breaking more windows costs nothing. (Wilson and Kelling, 1982: 31, emphasis in the original)

In a similar way, disorderly conduct was an "unrepaired window." If left unfixed, the message was sent that the community was a "house" where more disorderly conduct—the breaking of more windows—would be tolerated. Eventually, so many windows would be broken—serious crime would be so rampant—that the house or community would become unlivable. Importantly, the "broken windows" metaphor not only conveyed a theory of crime but also an obvious solution to lawlessness in urban neighborhoods: *fix the broken windows*. This job might involve residents, but the repairs would mainly have to be done by police officers. They would have to take steps to maintain order.

For Wilson and Kelling, the key insight was that order maintenance involved not simply fighting crime but rather focusing on the disorder that first undermined community social controls and subsequently allowed the invasion of serious criminals. Recall that disorder was not caused by hardened criminals but by "disreputable" people. As a result, the police would now exert control over "panhandlers, drunks, addicts, rowdy teenagers, prostitutes, loiterers, the mentally retarded" (p. 30). Sometimes called "zero-tolerance" or "quality-of-life" policing (Eck and Maguire, 2000: 224; Harcourt, 2001: 1), officers would now walk the streets and religiously confront or arrest people who flouted their "obligations of civility" by congregating on corners and blocking sidewalks, sleeping in doorways, urinating in public, openly drinking alcohol, jaywalking, or otherwise disturbing the peace.

Formal control by police that fixed the "broken window" of disorder was theorized to bolster informal community controls. This zero-tolerance strategy was meant to inform offenders and residents that someone now did care about the neighborhood and that breaking windows would be punished. This message was intended to make the community inhospitable to serious criminals and to embolden residents to reassert informal controls over public spaces. Notably, "broken windows" policing became a major reform within law enforcement (Harcourt, 2001; Kelling and Coles, 1996).

The viability of the "broken windows" theory of crime hinges in large part on whether, as Wilson and Kelling predict, disorder is in fact the main cause of serious crime. There is some evidence of a connection (Kelling and Coles, 1996; Skogan, 1990), though the relationship is likely limited in size, indirect through other processes, and conditioned by a range of factors (e.g., economic status of the community; Harcourt, 2001; Taylor, 2001). There is other research that suggests that the link between disorder and crime is spurious: that both are caused by the underlying social conditions of the neighborhood, such as a lack of collective efficacy (Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999; Sampson, 2012). Due to this debate, scholars are increasingly using rigorous study designs in order to further understand the

causal relationships among disorder, collective efficacy (or informal social control), and crime, including field experiments (where levels of disorder are manipulated across settings) and panel data analysis (e.g., Keizer et al., 2008; Wheeler et al., 2018). Though debate persists, a recent review of such studies suggests that disorder increases subsequent levels of crime directly, controlling for informal social control, and indirectly by reducing subsequent levels of informal control—with weakened informal control, in turn, increasing crime (Lanfear et al., 2020; but see also O'Brien et al., 2019).

But isn't there also convincing evidence that broken windows policing has resulted in miraculous reductions in crime in many communities? Didn't New York City's rate of homicide and violent crime plummet precipitously following the implementation of this model of law enforcement? If so, then the "evidence" from these natural experiments—the fact that serious crime was reduced after disorder was targeted for police intervention—would also suggest that the broken windows theory of crime has merit (Kelling and Coles, 1996).

Unfortunately, reality appears to paint a more complicated picture. There is evidence, for example, that crime rates began to fall in New York City prior to the police reform movement, and that cities that did not use the broken windows approach experienced comparable declines in their lawlessness (Eck and Maguire, 2000; Harcourt, 2001). Further, the reduction of New York's crime was likely influenced by a range of factors, including economic prosperity, changes in the drug market away from "crack" cocaine and the violence it induced, and the use of a variety of police tactics that included but were not limited to "quality-of-life" enforcement aimed at order maintenance (Harcourt, 2001; Zimring, 2012).

Determining the effectiveness of broken-windows policing is further complicated by the fact that it takes a variety of contrasting forms. On the one hand, police agencies might address disorder through a "'zero-tolerance'" approach in which almost any incident of disorder is handled in an aggressive manner. On the other hand, police agencies can attempt to "fix broken windows" within the context of a "community and problem-oriented policing" framework that prioritizes strong cooperation and collaboration between police and community members and a focus on specific recurring problems. Braga et al. (2015) conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of studies examining the effectiveness of policing disorder, and their results indicated effectiveness varied, depending on the approach. They found that, overall, policing disorder was associated with a modest reduction in crime. However, stronger crime-reduction effects were observed if policing disorder was done within the context of a broader community- and problem-oriented policing strategy, emphasizing community input, strong police-community relations, and the targeting of specific problem places within communities. In contrast, the meta-analysis indicated that policing individual disorderly persons in an aggressive manner (i.e., zero-tolerance policing) did not reduce crime. Such findings suggest that "broken-windows policing" may be a more effective strategy when it is focused on clear problems and when police are perceived by community members as cooperative and caring as opposed to aggressive and authoritarian—an idea that meshes with procedural justice theory, discussed next.

Procedural Justice, Police Legitimacy, and Obeying the Law

Extensive work by Tom Tyler outlines procedural justice theory, which suggests that citizens' judgements of procedural justice enhance perceived legitimacy of legal authorities; this perceived legitimacy, in turn, results in greater obedience to the law (e.g., Tyler, 1988, 1990, 2003, 2004; Tyler and Huo, 2002; see Chapter 35 in this part). Procedural justice theory proposes that the perceived legitimacy of legal authorities does not really rest on the effectiveness of legal authorities in reducing crime or the perceived fairness of the eventual *outcome* they deliver—whether they arrest a disorderly person, for example (e.g., Tyler, 2004: 91). Rather, the legitimacy that citizens assign to legal authorities is said to be related to the appropriateness and fairness of the *process* through which

authorities make decisions. Ideas about the appropriateness and rightfulness of the manner in which legal agents exercise authority are referred to as "judgements about procedural justice." Such judgements involve consideration of several key factors, including whether citizens are allowed to provide input in situations in which legal authority is being exercised; whether authorities handle legal matters with objectivity and evenhandedness as opposed to bias; whether legal authorities treat citizens with respect and dignity; and whether authorities operate with benevolence, motivated by the well-being of those involved in legal matters. Given such considerations, if citizens have positive judgements about procedural justice, then they are more likely to perceive the actions of legal authorities as legitimate and, in turn, comply with authorities and the law more generally.

An example can show this issue more clearly. Let's assume that a police officer patrolling an inner-city neighborhood sees a young adult male who the officer suspects might be carrying a firearm and drugs. In the past, the officer might have driven up to the "suspect," made the person put his hands on a building wall, and frisked him. All the while the officer might have been yelling instructions. Finding no contraband on the person, the officer might have rudely told the male to move on, believing he probably was up to no good. By contrast, an officer trained in procedural justice would have approached the "suspect" and told him that he needed to be searched. The officer could have asked the person to "please" assume a position to be searched. During this process, the officer would have been careful to listen to the young adult male—to give him a "voice"—and answer him not by yelling but with a tone of respect. Finding nothing, the officer might then have apologized for stopping the person and said this was part of the police department's effort to keep the streets safe—especially to ensure that no guns were being carried or drugs sold. The officer could have thanked the person for his cooperation.

Now, in both scenarios, the outcome was the same: the male suspect was released. In the first instance, however, the officer's aggressiveness and disrespect likely would have left a "bad taste" in the person's mouth, causing him to dislike "the police." In the second instance, the discomfort of being stopped and frisked might have been diminished because the officer was trying to act fairly and showed respect. That is, the *procedure* through which the detention was conducted was *just*. Walking away, the person might have felt aggravated at being stopped but also see this officer as being decent and not "hate" the police in general.

Tyler and colleagues have provided evidence over the past several decades in support of procedural justice theory. For example, research indicates that individuals who experience procedural justice during encounters with police are more likely to view police as legitimate, cooperate with police, and accept police decisions (McCluskey, 2003; Tyler, 1990; Tyler and Huo, 2002). Other research indicates that citizens' who perceive that fellow community members are treated fairly by the police tend to assign greater legitimacy to police and, in turn, cooperate with them (Sunshine and Tyler, 2003).

Recent work by other scholars provides perhaps even more convincing evidence of the potential for procedural justice to promote desistance from crime and lower overall levels of crime. A study by Papachristos et al. (2012) was designed to examine the roles of procedural justice and legitimacy among a unique sample of active offenders—those clearly prone to disobeying the law. While the offenders they studied, as a whole, held negative views of the law and legal actors, there still was variability across the sample. Offenders who perceived legal actors to be legitimate were more likely to comply with the law. Such offenders tended to be those with less saturated criminal networks (i.e., those with fewer ties to other offenders). Similarly, a study of serious adolescent offenders by Kaiser and Reisig (2019) showed that adolescents who experienced procedural justice in their personal encounters with police and the courts were less involved in criminal offending, with much of the effect mediated by perceived legitimacy of criminal justice authorities. Kaiser and Reisig (2019) also considered the influence of vicarious procedural justice judgements —the adolescent research subjects' judgements about the fairness with which others are treated by the police and

courts. They found that adolescents with positive vicarious procedural justice judgments offended at lower levels, and this effect was unmediated by perceived police/court legitimacy.

Thus, procedural justice theory and research counters the traditional deterrence argument that people comply largely due to instrumental concerns about the risk of arrest and punishment. In fact, it views deterrence as an inadequate argument for understanding why people comply with the law (Tyler, 2004). Instead, procedural justice theory suggests that compliance and conformity come about because people have internalized values about the legitimacy of law (and legal authorities) based on positive judgements about procedural justice. In short, people feel an obligation to obey authorities that they perceive as legitimate due to their appropriate and just behavior.

References

Agnew, Robert. 2009. *Juvenile Delinquency: Causes and Control*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Akers, Ronald. 1990. "Rational Choice, Deterrence, and Social Learning in Criminology: The Path Not Taken." *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* **81**: 653–676.

Assaad, Jean-Marc and M. Lyn Exum. 2002. "Understanding Intoxicated Violence from a Rational Choice Perspective." In Alex R. Piquero and Stephen G. Tibbetts (eds.), *Rational Choice and Criminal Behavior*, pp. 65–85. New York: Routledge.

Bachman, Ronet, Raymond Paternoster, and Sally Ward. 1992. "The Rationality of Sexual Offending: Testing a Deterrence/Rational Choice Conception of Sexual Assault." *Law and Society Review* **26**: 343–372.

Barlow, Hugh D. and Scott H. Decker, eds. 2010. *Criminology and Public Policy: Putting Theory to Work*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Becker, Gary S. 1968. "Crime and Punishment: An Economic Approach." *Journal of Political Economy* **76**: 169–217.

Benson, Michael and Tara L. Sams. 2013. "Emotions, Choice, and Crime." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 494–510. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bernasco, Wim and Richard Block. 2009. "Where Offenders Choose to Attack: A Discrete Choice Model of Robberies in Chicago." *Criminology* **47**: 93–130.

Bernburg, Jon Gunnar, Marvin D. Krohn, and Craig J. Rivera. 2006. "Official Labeling, Criminal Embeddedness, and Subsequent Delinquency." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **43**: 67–88.

Birkbeck, Christopher and Gary LaFree. 1993. "The Situational Analysis of Crime and Deviance." *Annual Review of Sociology* **19**: 113–137.

Bonta, James, Rebecca Jesseman, Tanya Rugge, and Robert Cormier. 2006. "Restorative Justice and Recidivism." In Dennis Sullivan and Larry Tifft (eds.), *Handbook of Restorative Justice*, pp. 108–120. New York: Routledge.

Bouffard, Jeffrey A. 2002. "The Influence of Emotion on Rational Decision Making in Sexual Aggression." *Journal of Criminal Justice* **30**: 121–134.

Braga, Anthony A., Glenn L. Pierce, Jack McDevitt, Brenda J. Bond, and Shea Cronin. 2008. "The Strategic Prevention of Gun Violence Among Gang-Involved Offenders." *Justice Quarterly* **25**: 132–162.

Braga, Anthony A., Brandon C. Welsh, and Cory Schnell. 2015. "Can Policing Disorder Reduce Crime? A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **52**: 567–588.

Braithwaite, John. 1989. *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

____. 2002. *Restorative Justice and Responsive Regulation*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Braithwaite, John, Eliza Ahmed, and Valerie Braithwaite. 2006. "Shame, Restorative Justice, and Crime." In Francis T. Cullen, John Paul Wright, and Kristie R. Blevins (eds.), *Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **15**, pp. 397–417. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Carmichael, Stephanie and Alex R. Piquero. 2004. "Sanctions, Perceived Anger, and Criminal Offending." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **20**: 371–393.

Center for Problem-Oriented Policing. N.D. "Situational Crime Prevention Evaluation Database." http://www.popcenter.org/library/scp/.

Chalfin, Aaron and Justin McCrary. 2017. “Criminal Deterrence: A Review of the Literature.” *Journal of Economic Literature* **55**: 5–48.

Clarke, Ronald V. 1997. *Situational Crime Prevention: Successful Case Studies*. Albany, NY: Harrow and Heston.

Clarke, Ronald V. and Derek B. Cornish. 1985. “Modeling Offenders’ Decisions: A Framework for Research and Policy.” In Michael Tonry and Norval Morris (eds.), *Crime and Justice: An Annual Review of Research*, Volume **6**, pp. 147–185. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

____. 2001. “Rational Choice.” In Raymond Paternoster and Ronet Bachman (eds.), *Explaining Criminals and Crime*, pp. 23–42. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

Clarke, Ronald V. and John E. Eck. 2005. *Crime Analysis for Problem Solvers*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice.

Clarke, Ronald V. and Marcus Felson, eds. 1993. *Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **5**: *Routine Activity and Rational Choice*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Cohen, Jacqueline, Wilpen Goor, and Piyusha Singh. 2003. “Estimating Intervention Effects in Varying Risk Settings: Do Police Raids Reduce Illegal Drug Dealing at Nuisance Bars?” *Criminology* **41**: 257–292.

Cornish, Derek. 1993. “Theories of Action in Criminology: Learning Theory and Rational Choice Approaches.” In Ronald V. Clarke and Marcus Felson (eds.), *Routine Activity and Rational Choice: Advances in Criminological Theory,* Volume **5**, pp. 351–382. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Cornish, Derek B. and Ronald V. Clarke. 1986. *The Reasoning Criminal*. New York: Springer-Verlag.

Cullen, Francis T., Travis C. Pratt, Sharon Levrant Miceli, and Melissa M. Moon. 2002. “Dangerous Liaison? Rational Choice Theory as the Basis for Correctional Intervention.” In Alex R. Piquero and Stephen G. Tibbetts (eds.), *Rational Choice and Criminal Behavior*, pp. 279–296. New York: Routledge.

Cullen, Francis T., John Paul Wright, and Brandon Applegate. 1996. “Control in the Community: The Limits of Reform.” In Alan T. Harland (ed.), *Choosing Correctional Options That Work*, pp. 69–116. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Eck, John E. 2002. “Preventing Crime at Places.” In Lawrence W. Sherman, David P. Farrington, Brandon C. Welsh, and Doris Layton MacKenzie (eds.), *Evidence-Based Crime Prevention*, pp. 241–294. London: Routledge.

Eck, John E. and Edward R. Maguire. 2000. “Have Changes in Policing Reduced Violent Crime? An Assessment of the Evidence.” In Alfred Blumstein and Joel Wallman (eds.), *The Crime Drop in America*, pp. 207–265. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Engel, Robin S., Marie Skubak Tillyer, and Nicholas Corsaro. 2013 “Reducing Gang Violence Using Focused Deterrence: Evaluating the Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV).” *Justice Quarterly* **30**: 403–439.

Exum, M. Lyn. 2002. “The Application and Robustness of the Rational Choice Perspective in the Study of Intoxicated and Angry Intentions to Aggress.” *Criminology* **40**: 933–966.

Fagan, Jeffrey and Alex R. Piquero. 2007. “Rational Choice and Developmental Influences on Recidivism Among Adolescent Felony Offenders.” *Journal of Empirical Legal Studies* **4**: 715–748.

Felson, Marcus. 2002. *Crime and Everyday Life*, 3rd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Foglia, Wanda D. 1997. “Perceptual Deterrence and the Mediating Effect of Internalized Norms Among Inner-City Teenagers.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **34**: 414–442.

Harcourt, Bernard E. 2001. *Illusion of Order: The False Promise of Broken Windows Policing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Huizinga, David, Anne Wylie Weiher, Rachele Espiritu, and Finn Esbensen. 2003. “Delinquency and Crime: Some Highlights from the Denver Youth Survey.” In Terence P. Thornberry and Marvin Krohn (eds.), *Taking Stock of Delinquency*, pp. 47–91. New York: Kluwer Academic.

Kaiser, Kimberly and Michael D. Reisig. 2019. “Legal Socialization and Self-Reported Criminal Offending: The Role of Procedural Justice and Legal Orientations.” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **35**: 135–154.

Keizer, Kees, Siegwart Lindenberg, and Linda Steg. 2008. “The Spreading of Disorder.” *Science* **322**: 1681–1685.

Kelling, George L. and Catherine M. Coles. 1996. *Fixing Broken Windows: Restoring Order and Reducing Crime in Our Communities*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Kilmer, Beau and Greg Midgette. 2020. “Criminal Deterrence: Evidence from an Individual-level Analysis of 24/7 Sobriety.” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* **39**: 801–834.

Kilmer, Beau, Nancy Nicosia, Paul Heaton, and Greg Midgette. 2013. “Efficacy of Frequent Monitoring with Swift, Certain, and Modest Sanctions for Violations: Insights from South Dakota’s 24/7 Sobriety Project.” *American Journal of Public Health* **103**: e37–e43.

Kleck, Gary and J. C. Barnes. 2013. “Deterrence and Macro-level Perceptions of Punishment Risks: Is There a ‘Collective Wisdom’?” *Crime & Delinquency* **59**: 1006–1035.

____. 2014. “Do More Police Lead to More Crime Deterrence?” *Crime & Delinquency* **60**: 716–738.

Kleck, Gary, Brion Sever, Spencer Li, and Marc Gertz. 2005. “The Missing Link in General Deterrence Research.” *Criminology* **43**: 623–660.

Kovandzic, Tomislav V., John J. Sloan III, and Lynne M. Vieraitis. 2004. “‘Striking Out’ as Crime Reduction Policy: The Impact of ‘Three Strikes’ Law on Crime Rates in U.S. Cities.” *Justice Quarterly* **21**: 207–239.

Lanfear, Charles C., Ross L. Matsueda, and Lindsey R. Beach. 2020. “Broken Windows, Informal Social Control, and Crime: Assessing Causality in Empirical Studies.” *Annual Review of Criminology* **3**: 97–120.

Levitt, Steven D. 2002. “Deterrence.” In James Q. Wilson and Joan Petersilia (eds.), *Crime*, pp. 435–450. Oakland, CA: ICS Press.

Loughran, Thomas, Ray Paternoster, Alex R. Piquero, and Greg Pogarsky. 2011. “On Ambiguity in Perceptions of Risk: Implications for Criminal Decision-Making and Deterrence.” *Criminology* **49**: 1029–1061.

Matsueda, Ross L., Derek A. Keager, and David Huizinga. 2006. “Deterring Delinquents: A Rational Choice Model of Theft and Violence.” *American Sociological Review* **71**: 95–122.

McCarthy, Bill. 1995. “Not Just ‘For the Thrill of It’: An Instrumentalist Elaboration of Katz’s Explanation of Sneaky Thrill Property Crime.” *Criminology* **33**: 519–538.

____. 2002. “New Economics of Sociological Criminology.” *Annual Review of Sociology* **28**: 417–442.

McCarthy, Bill and John Hagan. 2005. “Danger and the Decision to Offend.” *Social Forces* **83**: 1065–1096.

McCluskey, John D. 2003. *Police Requests for Compliance: Coercive and Procedurally Just Tactics*. New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing.

McGarrell, Edmund F., Steven Chermak, Jeremy M. Wilson, and Nicholas Corsaro. 2006. “Reducing Homicide Through a ‘Lever-Pulling’ Strategy.” *Justice Quarterly* **23**: 214–231.

McGarrell, Edmund F. and Natalie Kroovand Hipple. 2007. “Family Group Conferencing and Re-Offending Among First-Time Juvenile Offenders.” *Justice Quarterly* **24**: 221–246.

Meier, Robert F. and Terance D. Miethe. 1993. “Understanding Theories of Criminal Victimization.” In Michael Tonry (ed.), *Crime and Justice*, Volume **17**, pp. 459–499. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Nagin, Daniel S. 1998. “General Deterrence: A Review of the Empirical Evidence.” In Michael Tonry (ed.), *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, Volume **23**, pp. 1–42. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Nagin, Daniel S. and Raymond Paternoster. 1994. “Personal Capital and Social Control: The Deterrence Implications of a Theory of Individual Differences in Criminal Offending.” *Criminology* **32**: 581–606.

Nagin, Daniel S. and Greg Pogarsky. 2001. “Integrating Celerity, Impulsivity, and Extralegal Sanction Threats into a Model of General Deterrence: Theory and Evidence.” *Criminology* **39**: 865–892.

Nagin, Daniel S., Robert M. Solow, and Cynthia Lum. 2015. “Deterrence, Criminal Opportunities, and the Police.” *Criminology* **53**: 74–100.

Newman, Graeme, Ronald V. Clarke, and S. Giora Shoman, eds. 1997. *Rational Choice and Situational Crime Prevention*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.

O’Brien, Daniel T., Chelsea Farrell, and Brandon C. Welsh. 2019. “Looking through Broken Windows: The Impact of Neighborhood Disorder on Aggression and Fear of Crime Is an Artifact of Research Design.” *Annual Review of Criminology* **2**: 53–71.

Page, Joshua. 2011. *The Toughest Beat: Politics, Punishment, and the Prison Officers Union in California*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Papachristos, Andrew V., Tracey L. Meares, and Jeffrey Fagan. 2012. “Why Do Criminals Obey the Law? The Influence of Legitimacy and Social Networks on Active Gun Offenders.” *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* **102**: 397–440.

Paternoster, Raymond and Ronet Bachman. 2001. “Classical and Neuve Classical Schools of Criminology: Deterrence, Rational Choice, and Situational Theories of Crime.” In Raymond Paternoster and Ronet Bachman (eds.), *Explaining Criminals and Crime*, pp. 11–22. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

____. 2013. “Perceptual Deterrence Theory.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 649–671. New York: Oxford University Press.

Paternoster, Raymond, Robert Brame, Ronet Bachman, and Lawrence W. Sherman. 1997. “Do Fair Procedures Matter? The Effect of Procedural Justice on Spouse Assault.” *Law and Society Review* **31**: 163–204.

Paternoster, Raymond and Alex Piquero. 1995. “Reconceptualizing Deterrence: An Empirical Test of Personal and Vicarious Experiences.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **32**: 251–286.

Pickett, Justin T. and Shawn Bushway. 2015. “Dispositional Sources of Sanction Perceptions: Emotionality, Cognitive Style, Intolerance of Ambiguity, and Self-Efficacy.” *Law and Human Behavior* **39**: 624–640.

Pickett, Justin T. and Sean Patrick Roche. 2016. “Arrested Development: Misguided Directions in Deterrence Theory and Policy.” *Criminology and Public Policy* **15**: 727–751.

Piquero, Alex and Raymond Paternoster. 1996. “Specifying the Direct and Indirect Effects of Low Self-Control and Situational Factors in Offenders’ Decision Making: Toward a More Complete Model of Rational Offending.” *Justice Quarterly* **13**: 481–510.

____. 1998. “An Application of Stafford and Warr’s Reconceptualization of Deterrence to Drinking and Driving.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **35**: 3–39.

Piquero, Alex and Stephen Tibbetts, eds. 2002. *Rational Choice and Criminal Behavior*. New York: Routledge.

Piquero, Alex R., Zenta Gomez-Smith, and Lynn Langton. 2004. “Discerning Unfairness Where Others May Not: Low Self-Control and Unfair Sanction Perceptions.” *Criminology* **42**: 699–734.

Piquero, Alex R. and Greg Pogarsky. 2002. “Beyond Stafford and Warr’s Reconceptualization of Deterrence: Personal and Vicarious Experiences, Impulsivity, and Offending Behavior.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **39**: 153–186.

Pogarsky, Greg. 2002. “Identifying ‘Deterrable’ Offenders: Implications for Research on Deterrence.” *Justice Quarterly* **19**: 431–452.

____. 2007. “Deterrence and Individual Differences Among Convicted Offenders.” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **23**: 59–74.

Pogarsky, Greg, KiDeuck Kim, and Ray Paternoster. 2005. “Perceptual Change in the National Youth Survey: Lessons for Deterrence Theory and Offender Decision-Making.” *Justice Quarterly* **22**: 1–29.

Pogarsky, Greg and Alex R. Piquero. 2003. “Can Punishment Encourage Offending? Investigating the ‘Resetting’ Effect.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **40**: 95–120.

Pogarsky, Greg, Alex R. Piquero, and Ray Paternoster. 2004. “Modeling Change in Perceptions About Sanction Threats: The Neglected Linkage in Deterrence Theory.” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **20**: 343–369.

Pogarsky, Greg, Sean Patrick Roche, and Justin T. Pickett. 2017. “Heuristics and Biases, Rational Choice, and Sanction Perceptions.” *Criminology* **55**: 85–111.

Pratt, Travis C., Francis T. Cullen, Kristie R. Blevins, Leah E. Daigle, and Tamara D. Madensen. 2006. “The Empirical Status of Deterrence Theory: A Meta-Analysis.” In Francis T. Cullen, John Paul Wright, and Kristie R. Blevins (eds.), *Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **15**: 367–396. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Sampson, Robert J. 2012. *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sampson, Robert J. and Stephen W. Raudenbush. 1999. “Systematic Social Observation of Public Spaces: A New Look at Disorder in Urban Neighborhoods.” *American Journal of Sociology* **3**: 603–651.

Sherman, Lawrence W. 1993. “Defiance, Deterrence, and Irrelevance: A Theory of the Criminal Sanction.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **30**: 445–473.

Sherman, Lawrence W., Denise Gottfredson, Doris MacKenzie, John Eck, Peter Reuter, and Bushway. 1998. *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn’t, What’s Promising*. Washington, DC: Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice., U.S. Department of Justice.

Sherman, Lawrence W., Douglas A. Smith, Janell D. Schmidt, and Dennis Rogan. 1992. “Crime, Punishment, and Stake in Conformity: Legal and Informal Control of Domestic Violence.” *American Sociological Review* **57**: 680–690.

Sherman, Lawrence W. and David Weisburd. 1995. “General Deterrent Effects of Police Patrol in Crime ‘Hot Spots’: A Randomized, Controlled Trial.” *Justice Quarterly* **12**: 625–648.

Sitren, Alicia H. and Brandon K. Applegate. 2007. “Testing the Deterrent Effects of Personal and Vicarious Experience with Punishment and Punishment Avoidance.” *Deviant Behavior* **28**: 29–55.

Skogan, Wesley G. 1990. *Disorder and Decline: Crime and the Spiral of Decay in American Neighborhoods*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Stafford, Mark C. and Mark Warr. 1993. “A Reconceptualization of General and Specific Deterrence.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **30**: 123–135.

Sunshine, Jason and Tom R. Tyler. 2003. “The Role of Procedural Justice and Legitimacy in Shaping Public Support for Policing.” *Law and Society Review* **37**: 513–548.

Taylor, Ralph B. 2001. *Breaking Away from Broken Windows: Baltimore Neighborhoods and the Nationwide Fight Against Crime, Grime, Fear, and Decline*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Telep, Cody W., Renee J. Mitchell, and David Weisburd. 2014. “How Much Time Should the Police Spend at Crime Hot Spots? Answers from a Police Agency Directed Randomized Field Trial in Sacramento, California.” *Justice Quarterly* **31**: 905–933.

Telep, Cody W. and David Weisburd. 2012. “What Is Known About the Effectiveness of Police Practices in Reducing Crime and Disorder?” *Police Quarterly* **15**: 331–357.

Thomas, Kyle J., Thomas A. Loughran, and Alex R. Piquero. 2013. “Do Individual Characteristics Explain Variation in Sanction Risk Updating Among Serious Juvenile Offenders? Advancing the Logic of Differential Deterrence.” *Law and Human Behavior* **37**: 10–21.

Tittle, Charles R. 1995. *Control Balance: Toward a General Theory of Deviance*. Boulder, CO: Westview.

Tittle, Charles R. and Ekaterina V. Botchkovar. 2005. “Self-Control, Criminal Motivation and Deterrence: An Investigation Using Russian Respondents.” *Criminology* **43**: 307–354.

Tonry, Michael. 2008. “Learning from the Limitations of Deterrence Research.” *Crime and Justice* **37**: 279–308.

Tunnel, Kenneth D. 1992. *Choosing Crime*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall.

____. 2002. “The Impulsiveness and Routinization of Decision-Making.” In Alex R. Piquero and Stephen G. Tibbetts (eds.), *Rational Choice and Criminal Behavior*, pp. 265–278. New York: Routledge.

Tyler, Tom R. 1988. “What Is Procedural Justice? Criteria Used by Citizens to Assess the Fairness of Legal Procedures.” *Law and Society Review* **22**: 103–135.

____. 1990. *Why People Obey the Law*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

____. 2003. “Procedural Justice, Legitimacy, and the Effective Rule of Law.” *Crime and Justice* **30**: 283–357.

____. 2004. “Enhancing Police Legitimacy.” *The ANNALS of the American Association of Political and Social Science*, **593**: 84–99.

Tyler, Tom R. and Yuen Huo. 2002. *Trust in the Law: Encouraging Public Cooperation with the Police and Courts*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

van Gelder, Jean-Louis and Reinout E. de Vries. 2012. “Traits and States: Integrating Personality and Affect into a Model of Criminal Decision Making.” *Criminology* **50**: 637–672.

____. 2014. “Rational Misbehavior? Evaluating an Integrated Dual-Process Model of Criminal Decision Making.” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **30**: 1–27.

Ward, David A., Mark C. Stafford, and Louis N. Gray. 2006. “Rational Choice, Deterrence, and Theoretical Integration.” *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* **36**: 571–585.

Weisburd, David, Anthony A. Braga, Elizabeth R. Groff, and Alese Wooditch. 2017. “Can Hot Spots Policing Reduce Crime in Urban Areas? An Agent Based Simulation.” *Criminology* **55**:137–173.

Weisburd, David, Tomer Einat, and Matt Kowalski. 2008. “The Miracle of the Cells: An Experimental Study of Interventions to Increase Payment of Court-Ordered Financial Obligations.” *Criminology and Public Policy* **7**: 9–36.

Weisburd, David, Elin Waring, and Ellen Chayet. 1995. “Specific Deterrence in a Sample of Offenders Convicted of White-Collar Crimes.” *Criminology* **33**: 587–607.

Weisburd, David, Alese Wooditch, Sarit Weisburd, and Sue-Ming Yang. 2015. “Do Stop, Question, and Frisk Practices Deter Crime? Evidence at Microunits of Space and Time.” *Criminology and Public Policy* **15**: 31–56.

Wheeler, Andrew P., Dae-Young Kim, and Scott W. Phillips. 2018. “The Effect of Housing Demolitions on Crime in Buffalo, New York.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **55**: 390–424.

Wikström, Per-Olof H. 2008. “Deterrence and Deterrence Experiences: Preventing Crime Through the Threat of Punishment.” In Giora Shoham Shlomo, Ori Beck, and Martin Kett (eds.), *International Handbook of Penology and Criminal Justice*, pp. 345–378. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

Wilson, James Q. and George L. Kelling. 1982. “Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety.” *Atlantic Monthly* **249** (3): 29–38.

Wooldredge, John and Amy Thistlethwaite. 2002. “Reconsidering Domestic Violence Recidivism: Conditioned Effects of Legal Controls by Individual and Aggregate Levels of Stake in Conformity.” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **18**: 45–70.

Wright, Bradley R. E., Avshalom Caspi, Terrie E. Moffitt, and Ray Paternoster. 2004. “Does the Perceived Risk of Punishment Deter Criminally Prone Individuals? Rational Choice, Self-Control, and Crime.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **41**: 180–213.

Wright, Richard T. and Scott H. Decker. 1997. *Armed Robbers in Action: Stickups and Street Culture*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

____. 1994. *Burglars on the Job: Streetlife and Residential Breakins*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Wright, Richard T. and Volkan Topalli. 2013. “Choosing Street Crime.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 461–474. New York: Oxford University Press.

Zimring, Franklin. 2012. *The City That Became Safe: New York’s Lessons for Urban Crime and Its Control*. New York: Oxford University Press.

32.
Reconceptualizing Deterrence Theory*

Mark C. Stafford

Mark Warr

Most deterrence theorists make a sharp distinction between specific and general deterrence. Specific deterrence means that punishing offenders for their crimes deters those specific offenders from further crime. General deterrence means that punishing some offenders deters people in the general population from crime, including those who were not punished. Specific and general deterrence are said to refer to distinct populations: punished offenders in the first case and the general public in the second. Specific deterrence deals with direct experiences with punishment, while general deterrence deals with indirect experiences with punishment (knowledge of the punishments received by others).

Stafford and Warr question this sharp distinction. They argue that the same people are often subject to both specific and general deterrence. In particular, individuals often have both direct and indirect experiences with punishment (e.g., knowledge of friends and neighbors who have been punished). Also, Stafford and Warr argue that deterrence theorists need to consider experiences with punishment avoidance. That is, have individuals been able to avoid punishment for any of their crimes or are they aware of others who have avoided punishment for their crimes? The authors argue that crime is a function of direct and indirect experiences with punishment and direct and indirect experiences with punishment avoidance, and that researchers who consider all four of these factors should find more support for deterrence theory. Most researchers, however, consider only direct experiences with punishment (if they are examining specific deterrence) or indirect experiences with punishment (if they are examining general deterrence).

As indicated in the Introduction to Part X, preliminary data provide some support for Stafford and Warr's reconceptualization of deterrence theory. Both direct and indirect experiences with punishment and punishment avoidance affect perceptions of the certainty of punishment (and thereby crime). However, certain studies suggest that—contrary to Stafford and Warr's theory—direct experiences with punishment reduce perceptions of certainty and increase the likelihood of further crime (see Piquero and Pogarsky, 2002).

Reference

Piquero, Alex R. and Greg Pogarsky. 2002. "Beyond Stafford and Warr's Reconceptualization of Deterrence: Personal and Vicarious Experiences, Impulsivity, and Offending Behavior." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **39**: 153–186.

The conception of deterrence that guides … research has remained largely unchanged. A key element of that conception is the distinction between general and specific deterrence. Virtually all definitions of those phenomena point in one way or another to this distinction: Whereas general deterrence refers to the effects of legal punishment on the general public (i.e., potential offenders), specific deterrence pertains to the effects of legal punishment on those who have suffered it (i.e., punished offenders; for a review, see Gibbs 1975, pp. 32–39). For example, Nagin (1978) defines general deterrence as the

> imposition of sanctions on one person [in order to] demonstrate to the rest of the public the expected costs of a criminal act, and thereby discourage criminal behavior in the general population. (p. 96)

In contrast, Andenaes (1968) states that if persons are "deterred by the actual experience of punishment, we speak of *special* [specific] *deterrence*" (p. 78).

Both definitions recognize the importance of some kind of experience with legal punishment in deterring persons from committing crimes. But for members of the general public (general deterrence) it is indirect experience with punishment (observing or otherwise having knowledge of the punishment of others) that deters, whereas for punished offenders (specific deterrence) it is direct (personal) experience (Meier and Johnson 1977, pp. 294–95).

This conception of general and specific deterrence is widely recognized and accepted by criminologists, but it has serious shortcomings. Put briefly, we will argue that the conventional distinction between general and specific deterrence rests on faulty logic and that it has done little to clarify the deterrence process. After presenting these arguments, we propose a reconceptualization of general and specific deterrence, and apply it to some current controversies in the deterrence literature.

---

* Sage Publications, Inc. Journals, from The Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency: A Reconceptualization of General and Specific Deterrence, Mark C. Stafford and Mark Warr, 30, 2, pages 123–128, 133–135, 1964; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

Distinguishing General and Specific Deterrence

Deterrence studies are classified commonly as bearing on one type of deterrence or the other, with most purportedly involving general rather than specific deterrence (see reviews by Gibbs 1975, chap. 5; Tittle 1980, chap. 1; Zimring and Hawkins 1973, chap. 4). However, the rationale for such classification is not entirely clear.

Consider a hypothetical study of what is likely to be regarded as general deterrence. In such a case, investigators might focus on persons who have never suffered any legal punishment for any crime, on the grounds that such persons have knowledge of punishment, if at all, only indirectly from the experiences of others (Gibbs 1975, pp. 34, 37). However, there are two kinds of people who have never suffered a legal punishment: (a) those who have never committed any crime (ignoring the possibility that innocent persons can be punished) and (b) those who have committed crimes but have avoided punishment. Only the first kind of person can be said to have no direct experience with legal punishment. Although the second kind of person has not suffered a legal punishment, he or she has by definition acquired experience with *avoiding punishment*, and that experience is likely to affect the chances of committing crimes again. In particular, experience with avoiding punishment is likely to affect perceptions of the certainty and severity of punishment, the two principal variables in recent deterrence studies. Of these two variables, perceptions of certainty should be affected more strongly by punishment avoidance, because getting away with a crime provides little information about the legal consequences of being caught (Paternoster 1987, p. 189; Paternoster, Saltzman, Waldo, and Chiricos 1983a, p. 281, 1983b, p. 458).

Like the concept of deterrence, which involves the omission of legally proscribed acts (Gibbs 1975, p. 3; Meier and Johnson 1977), the notion of punishment avoidance may be somewhat difficult to imagine because it refers to events that did *not* happen. However, unlike deterrence, punishment avoidance is also contingent on events that did occur, that is, the commission of crimes. Hence, in contrast to deterrence, punishment avoidance is not inherently unobservable. For example, everyone who drives in urban America has observed another person driving in a reckless manner with no legal punishment, or has witnessed such criminal events as driving while intoxicated that did not even come to the attention of the police.

To some, the concept of punishment avoidance may appear to add little to deterrence theory, because punishment avoidance is simply the opposite of punishment itself. The distinction may be logically banal, but it is potentially critical for empirical reasons. To illustrate, it is possible that punishment avoidance does more to encourage crime than punishment does to discourage it. Offenders whose experience is limited largely to avoiding punishment may come to believe that they are immune from punishment, even in the face of occasional evidence to the contrary. Perhaps the greatest value of the concept is that it underscores the fundamental principle that no criminal act is without consequences. In the wake of a crime, offenders always will experience punishment or punishment avoidance, and it is dubious to argue that only the former impacts subsequent behavior.

The immediate point is that what usually is taken to be general deterrence is not limited necessarily to persons who have no direct experience with legal punishment. The point is crucial because, if self-report data are to be believed, there are few persons (at least among young males) who have never avoided punishment, especially for minor offenses (for a review, see Empey and Stafford 1991, chap. 6). Consequently, the conventional distinction between general and specific deterrence rests more on the *nature* of prior direct experience with legal punishment than on the mere presence of such experience.

Direct and Indirect Experience with Punishment

Now consider a related problem with specific deterrence. Studies of specific deterrence typically focus on punished offenders (or comparisons of punished and unpunished offenders) and examine the frequency of post-punishment offending for evidence of deterrence (e.g., Murray and Cox 1979; Schneider and Ervin 1990; Smith and Gartin 1989). There is nothing intrinsically wrong with this procedure, but investigators commonly assume that an offender's direct experience with suffering a punishment is the only operative variable when it comes to predicting future behavior. In addition to ignoring the offender's experience with avoiding punishment, such an assumption overlooks the possibility that one can suffer a legal punishment and at the same time have knowledge of punishment from the experiences of others (i.e., have indirect experience with punishment).

Suppose that an individual is caught and fined after shoplifting and that this is his or her first offense of any type. The direct experience of being fined is likely to be salient, but surely its deterrent efficacy will depend on whether the individual believes or knows that other persons (particularly others like him or her) have a similar certainty and severity of punishment, or whether he or she believes that in this particular instance the punishment was ill-fated and others would have gotten away with the crime, or that they would have received a less (or more) severe punishment (Ward, Menke, Gray, and Stafford 1986, pp. 502–3).

The point to be emphasized is that in most populations—whether members of the general public or punished offenders—people are likely to have a *mixture* of indirect and direct experience with punishment and punishment avoidance. That point is not lost on all deterrence researchers. For example, Lempert (1982, p. 532), in a study of enforcement of child-support orders, observes that men who have been jailed for nonpayment often meet or hear of others who are in jail for the same offense. Hence, these men gain both direct and indirect experience with legal punishment (p. 549). However, by adopting the conventional distinction between general and specific deterrence, investigators perpetuate the notion that the two forms of deterrence occur among distinct populations.

The problem with such a notion becomes clearer when one considers that offenders often commit more than one type of crime, and that they may or may not suffer a legal punishment for each type. Consider a person who is caught and punished after committing his or her first burglary, but who has also committed other crimes (e.g., drug use, robbery, auto theft) and avoided punishment in each case. To claim that the direct experience of being punished for the burglary is the only relevant consideration in predicting the offender's future behavior is to ignore what has been said about the potential effects of punishment avoidance, not to mention the potential effects of indirect experience with punishment. Putting it more carefully, there are four relevant considerations in the example at hand: (a) the direct experience with suffering the punishment for the burglary, (b) the direct experience with punishment avoidance for the other crimes, (c) indirect experience with punishment and punishment avoidance for the burglary, and (d) indirect experience with punishment and punishment avoidance for the other crimes.

One possibility is that the direct experience with punishment for the burglary could reduce the offender's likelihood of repeating the other crimes (e.g., by increasing the perceived certainty of punishment for these offenses). However, it could also work in the reverse—the direct experience of getting away with the other crimes could increase the chances of committing further burglaries. And when one considers *indirect* experience with punishment and punishment avoidance for all of the offenses, there are still other possibilities. For example, the arrest of fellow offenders for the same crime(s) might lead to the conclusion that the odds of arrest have increased substantially.

An underlying assumption in all such possibilities is that people may estimate the certainty and severity of punishment for a particular type of crime by reference to crimes in general or at least similar types of offenses (e.g., all property crimes) rather than from information that is "crime-specific" (Gibbs 1975, p. 35; Erickson and Gibbs

1975; Paternoster 1986). If so, it almost certainly will be true that a mixture of indirect and direct experiences with legal punishment and punishment avoidance will be relevant for most persons. Even if people estimate certainty and severity entirely from crime-specific information, a mixture of punishment experiences is likely to be relevant, and research is needed on such questions as whether direct experience with punishment and punishment avoidance affects the deterrent efficacy of indirect experience (Zimring and Hawkins 1973, pp. 224–29).

A Reconceptualization

The conceptual problems outlined above stem, we believe, from the manner in which general and specific deterrence commonly are defined. That is, the practice of distinguishing general and specific deterrence by reference to distinct populations (either the general public or punished offenders) tends to obfuscate critical issues. Instead, we propose that the distinction between the two types of deterrence be limited to contrasting kinds of experience with legal punishment. If deterrence is defined as the omission or curtailment of a criminal act out of fear of legal punishment (Gibbs 1975, p. 39), then general deterrence refers to the deterrent effect of *indirect experience with punishment and punishment avoidance* and specific deterrence refers to the deterrent effect of *direct experience with punishment and punishment avoidance*.

The proposed reconceptualization has several advantages over that currently in use. First, it recognizes the possibility that *both* general and specific deterrence can operate for any given person or in any population. Second, it treats punishment avoidance as analytically distinct from the experience of suffering a punishment.

A third advantage of the proposed reconceptualization of general and specific deterrence is its compatibility with contemporary learning theory, particularly the distinction between observational/vicarious learning and experiential learning (for discussions of the connection between deterrence concepts/principles and learning theory, see Akers 1990; Cavender 1979; Moffitt 1983). Bandura (1977), for example, argues that experiential learning

> results from the positive and negative effects that actions produce. When people deal with everyday events, some of their responses prove successful, while others have no effect or result in punishing outcomes. Through this process of differential reinforcement, successful forms of behavior are eventually selected and ineffectual ones are discarded. (p. 17)

As for observational or vicarious learning, Bandura (1977) notes that

> people can profit from the successes and mistakes of others as well as from their own experiences. In everyday situations numerous opportunities exist to observe the actions of others and the occasions on which they are rewarded, ignored, or punished.... Observed outcomes can alter behavior in their own right in much the same way as directly experienced consequences. (p. 117)

Just as recent versions of learning theory suggest that any behavior is likely to be a consequence of both observational/vicarious learning and experiential learning (e.g., Akers, Krohn, Lanza-Kaduce, and Radosevich 1979, p. 638; Bandura 1977, chap. 2), the basic premise of the proposed reconceptualization is that the rate of crime in virtually any population will be a function of both general and specific deterrence. This is not to say that the two types of deterrence will be equally important from one population to the next (Gray, Ward, Stafford, and Menke 1985, pp. 83–84). Among persons with limited direct experience with punishment and/or punishment avoidance, the rate of crime is more likely to be a function of general deterrence (indirect experience with punishment and punishment avoidance). Indeed, in the special case of persons who have *no* direct experience with punishment or punishment avoidance—those who have never committed any crimes at all—the only possibly relevant consideration is general deterrence. However, among persons who have been punished many times and/or have avoided punishment repeatedly (i.e., habitual offenders), their criminal behavior should be largely a function of specific deterrence (direct experience with punishment and punishment avoidance). The implication is that individuals can be viewed as falling along a continuum characterized by general deterrence at one extreme and specific deterrence at the other....

Conclusions

While no conception is right or wrong, some are more useful than others. For more than two decades, deterrence researchers have complained that there is no systematic theory of deterrence (e.g., Gibbs 1968, p. 530, 1975, p. 2; Tittle 1985, pp. 285–87; Zimring 1978, p. 172), which is a tacit admission that conventional conceptions of general and specific deterrence have provided little or no impetus to such theorizing. As Zimring and Hawkins (1973) observe, most researchers "who ... draw this distinction [between general and specific deterrence] make no further use of it" (p. 73).

The proposed reconceptualization suggests that it is unnecessary to formulate separate theories of general and specific deterrence. Rather, a single theory is possible that centers on indirect experience with legal punishment and punishment avoidance and direct experience with legal punishment and punishment avoidance. Recognizing that people may think of punishment for crimes in general rather than in crime-specific terms, such a theory would need to consider indirect and direct experience with punishment and punishment avoidance for crimes other than those that individuals actually have committed.

Unfortunately, if the proposed reconceptualization is accepted, tests of the deterrence doctrine necessarily will become more complex. For example, tests based on survey data would need to include, at a minimum, measures of (a) persons' perceptions of their own certainty and severity of legal punishment for crimes, (b) persons' perceptions of the certainty and severity of legal punishment for others (presumably those within their immediate social network), (c) self-reported criminal behavior, including self-reports of direct experience with punishment and punishment avoidance, and (d) estimates of peers's criminal behavior, including their experiences with punishment and punishment avoidance.

Of course, there are alternatives to a survey methodology, such as an experimental design. Indeed, an experimental design might facilitate an assessment of the separate effects of indirect and direct experience with legal punishment and punishment avoidance on crime (see, e.g., Sherman and Berk 1984). However, only a very complex experimental design can facilitate an examination of the *relative* effects of indirect and direct experience with punishment and punishment avoidance, which may be the more important issue as far as a theory of deterrence is concerned.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe the difference between specific and general deterrence. Give an example of a situation where there is a specific deterrent effect but no general deterrent effect.
2. Why is it important to consider experiences with punishment avoidance?
3. Suppose you want to determine whether sanctions at your school deter cheating. Drawing on Stafford and Warr, describe the types of questions you would need to ask in a survey to properly test deterrence theory.
4. Assuming that Stafford and Warr are correct in their reconceptualization of deterrence theory, what policies would you recommend for reducing cheating at your school? (Be creative; do not simply say that more cheaters should be punished.)
5. Stafford and Warr discuss direct and indirect experiences with punishment and punishment avoidance. Do you think any of these four factors has a larger effect on crime than the others? What conditions might influence the relative importance of these factors?

33.
Crime as a Rational Choice*

Derek B. Cornish

Ronald V. Clarke

The rational choice perspective draws heavily on classical theory and economic theories of crime and argues that "crimes are broadly the result of rational choices based on analyses of anticipated costs and benefits" (Cornish and Clarke, 1986: vi). Individuals, then, choose to engage in crime in an effort to maximize their benefits and minimize their costs. This choice process occurs in two major stages.

First, individuals decide whether they are willing to become involved in crime to satisfy their needs (the "initial involvement model"). Individuals may consider a range of different ways of satisfying their needs—some criminal and some not. Whether they decide to engage in crime is heavily influenced by their previous learning and experience, including their moral code, view of themselves, personal and vicarious experiences of crime, and the degree to which they can plan and exercise foresight (Clarke and Cornish, 1985: 166). Their previous learning and experience, in turn, are heavily influenced by a range of background factors, including individual traits, upbringing, and social and demographic characteristics (e.g., sex, class). Most of the factors said to influence this decision to become involved in crime are drawn from the leading crime theories, discussed in previous sections.

Second, once individuals decide they are ready to engage in crime, they must decide to commit a particular offense (the "criminal event model"). This decision is heavily influenced by the immediate situation of the individual. The individual may have a desperate need for money or may be out with friends who suggest engaging in crime. The individual then selects a target for the offense (e.g., a home to burglarize) based on a consideration of costs and benefits (e.g., is the home occupied, is it easily accessible, is there reason to believe that it contains valuable items). The factors that individuals consider may differ dramatically from one type of crime to another, which is why rational choice theorists argue that "crime-specific" models must be employed. That is, different models of decision making are necessary for different types of crime. The leading crime theories have paid little attention to those factors that influence the decision to commit a particular criminal offense, and one of the leading contributions of rational choice theory has been to focus attention on this area. Research in this area has also contributed to the development of crime control strategies (Center for Problem-Oriented Policing, n.d.; Smith and Clarke, 2012; Eck, 2002).

References

Center for Problem-Oriented Policing. n.d. "Situational Crime Prevention Evaluation Database." http://www.popcenter.org/library/scp/.

Clarke, Ronald V. and Derek B. Cornish. 1985. "Modeling Offenders' Decisions: A Framework for Research and Policy." In Michael Tonry and Norval Morris (eds.), *Crime and Justice: An Annual Review of Research*, Volume **6**, pp. 147–185. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Cornish, Derek B. and Ronald V. Clarke. 1986. *The Reasoning Criminal*. New York: Springer-Verlag.

Eck, John E. 2002. “Preventing Crime at Places.” In Lawrence W. Sherman, David P. Farrington, Brandon C. Welsh, and Doris Layton MacKenzie (eds.), *Evidence-Based Crime Prevention*, pp. 241–294. London: Routledge.

Smith, Martha J. and Ronald V. Clarke. 2012. “Situational Crime Prevention: Classifying Techniques Using ‘Good Enough’ Theory.” In. Brandon C. Welsh and David P. Farrington (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Crime Prevention*, pp. 291–315. New York: Oxford University Press.

The synthesis we had suggested—a rational choice perspective on criminal behavior—was intended to locate criminological findings within a framework particularly suitable for thinking about policy-relevant research. Its starting point was an assumption that offenders seek to benefit themselves by their criminal behavior; that this involves the making of decisions and of choices, however rudimentary on occasion these processes might be; and that these processes exhibit a measure of rationality, albeit constrained by limits of time and ability and the availability of relevant information. It was recognized that this conception of crime seemed to fit some forms of offending better than others. However, even in the case of offenses that seemed to be pathologically motivated or impulsively executed, it was felt that rational components were also often present and that the identification and description of these might have lessons for crime-control policy.

Second, a crime-specific focus was adopted, not only because different crimes may meet different needs, but also because the situational context of decision making and the information being handled will vary greatly among offenses. To ignore these differences might well be to reduce significantly one’s ability to identify fruitful points for intervention (similar arguments have been applied to other forms of “deviant” behavior, such as gambling: cf. Cornish, 1978). A crime-specific focus is likely to involve rather finer distinctions than those commonly made in criminology. For example, it may not be sufficient to divide burglary simply into its residential and commercial forms. It may also be necessary to distinguish between burglaries committed in middle-class suburbs, in public housing, and in wealthy residential enclaves. Empirical studies suggest that the kinds of individuals involved in these different forms of residential burglary, their motivations, and their methods all vary considerably (cf. Clarke and Hope, 1984, for a review). Similar cases could be made for distinguishing between different forms of robbery, rape, shoplifting, and car theft to take some obvious cases. (In lay thinking, of course, such distinctions are also often made, as between mugging and other forms of robbery, for example.) A corollary of this requirement is that the explanatory focus of the theory is on crimes, rather than on offenders. Such a focus, we believe, provides a counterweight to theoretical and policy preoccupations with the offender.

Third, it was argued that a decision-making approach to crime requires that a fundamental distinction be made between criminal involvement and criminal events. Criminal involvement refers to the processes through which individuals choose to become initially involved in particular forms of crime, to continue, and to desist. The decision processes in these different stages of involvement will be influenced in each case by a different set of factors and will need to be separately modeled. In the same way, the decision processes involved in the commission of a specific crime (i.e., the criminal event) will utilize their own special categories of information. Involvement decisions are characteristically multistage, extend over substantial periods of time, and will draw upon a large range of information, not all of which will be directly related to the crimes themselves. Event decisions, on the other hand, are frequently shorter processes, utilizing more circumscribed information largely relating to immediate circumstances and situations.

The above points can be illustrated by consideration of some flow diagrams that the editors previously developed (Clarke and Cornish, 1985) to model one specific form of crime, namely, burglary in a middle-class residential suburb. Figure 33.1, which represents the processes of initial involvement in this form of crime, has two decision points. The first (Box 7) is the individual’s recognition of his or her “readiness” to commit the specific offense in

order to satisfy certain needs for money, goods, or excitement. The preceding boxes indicate the wide range of factors that bring the individual to this condition. Box 1, in particular, encompasses the various historical (and contemporaneous) background factors with which traditional criminology has been preoccupied; these have been seen to determine the values, attitudes, and personality traits that dispose the individual to crime. In a rational choice context, however, these factors are reinterpreted as influencing the decisions and judgments that lead to involvement. The second decision (Box 8) actually to commit this form of burglary is the outcome of some chance event, such as an urgent need for cash, which demands action.

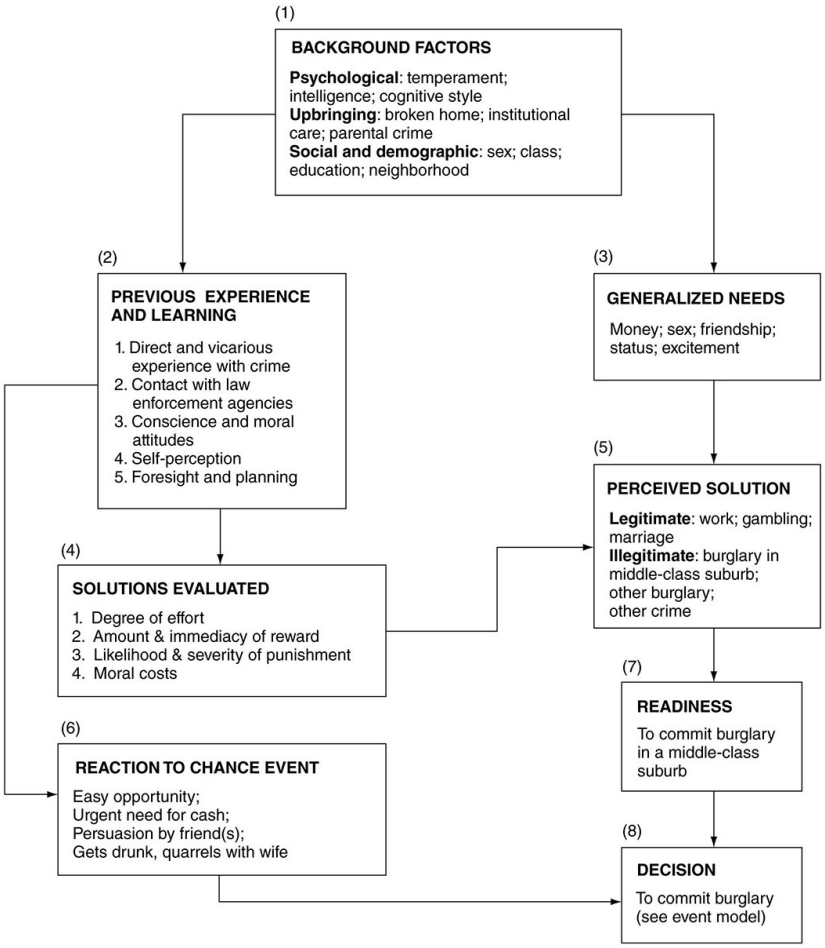


FIGURE 33.1 Initial Involvement Model (example: burglary in a middle-class suburb) Source: *Crime and Justice*, vol. 6. M. Tonry and N. Morris (eds.), University of Chicago Press, 1985. By permission.

Figure 33.2, which is much simpler, depicts the further sequence of decision making that leads to the burglar selecting a particular house. The range of variables influencing this decision sequence is much narrower and reflects the influence of situational factors related to opportunity, effort, and proximal risks. In most cases this decision sequence takes place quite quickly. Figure 33.3 sketches the classes of variables, relating to changes in the individual's degree of professionalism, peer group, lifestyle, and values, that influence the constantly reevaluated decision to continue with this form of burglary.

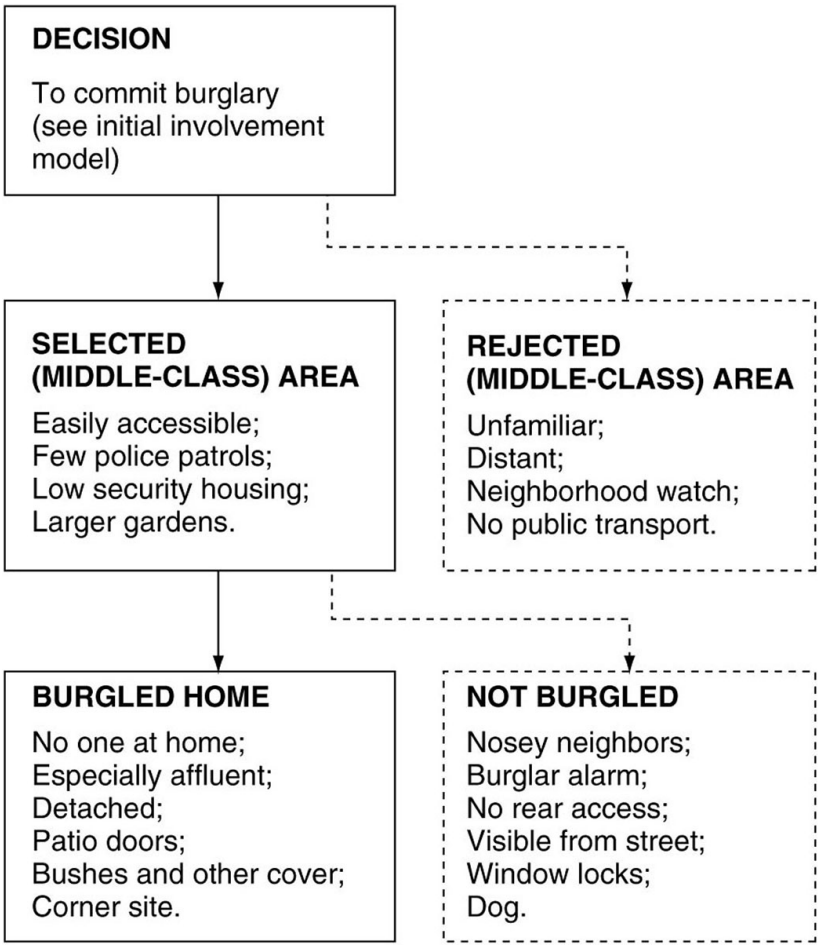


FIGURE 33.2 Event Model (example: burglary in a middle-class suburb) Source: *Crime and Justice*, vol. 6. M. Tonry and N. Morris (eds.), University of Chicago Press, 1985. By permission.

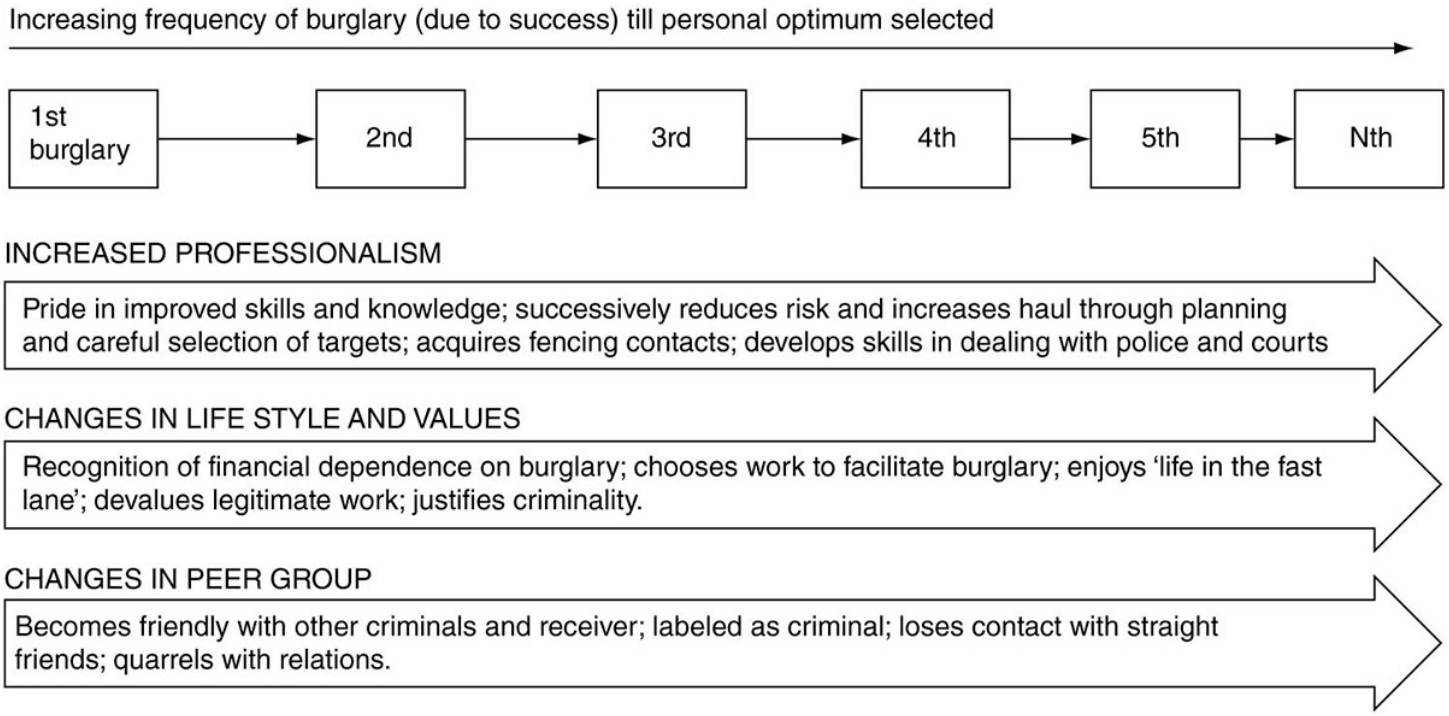

Increasing frequency of burglary (due to success) till personal optimum selected
1st burglary
2nd
3rd
4th
5th
Nth
INCREASED PROFESSIONALISM
Pride in improved skills and knowledge; successively reduces risk and increases haul through planning and careful selection of targets; acquires fencing contacts; develops skills in dealing with police and courts
CHANGES IN LIFE STYLE AND VALUES
Recognition of financial dependence on burglary; chooses work to facilitate burglary; enjoys 'life in the fast lane'; devalues legitimate work; justifies criminality.
CHANGES IN PEER GROUP
Becomes friendly with other criminals and receiver; labeled as criminal; loses contact with straight friends; quarrels with relations.

FIGURE 33.3 Continuing Involvement Model (example: burglary in a middle-class suburb) Source: *Crime and Justice*, vol. 6. M. Tonry and N. Morris (eds.), University of Chicago Press, 1985. By permission.

Figure 33.4 illustrates, with hypothetical data, similar reevaluations that may lead to desistance. In this case, two classes of variables are seen to have a cumulative effect: life-events (such as marriage), and those more directly related to the criminal events themselves.

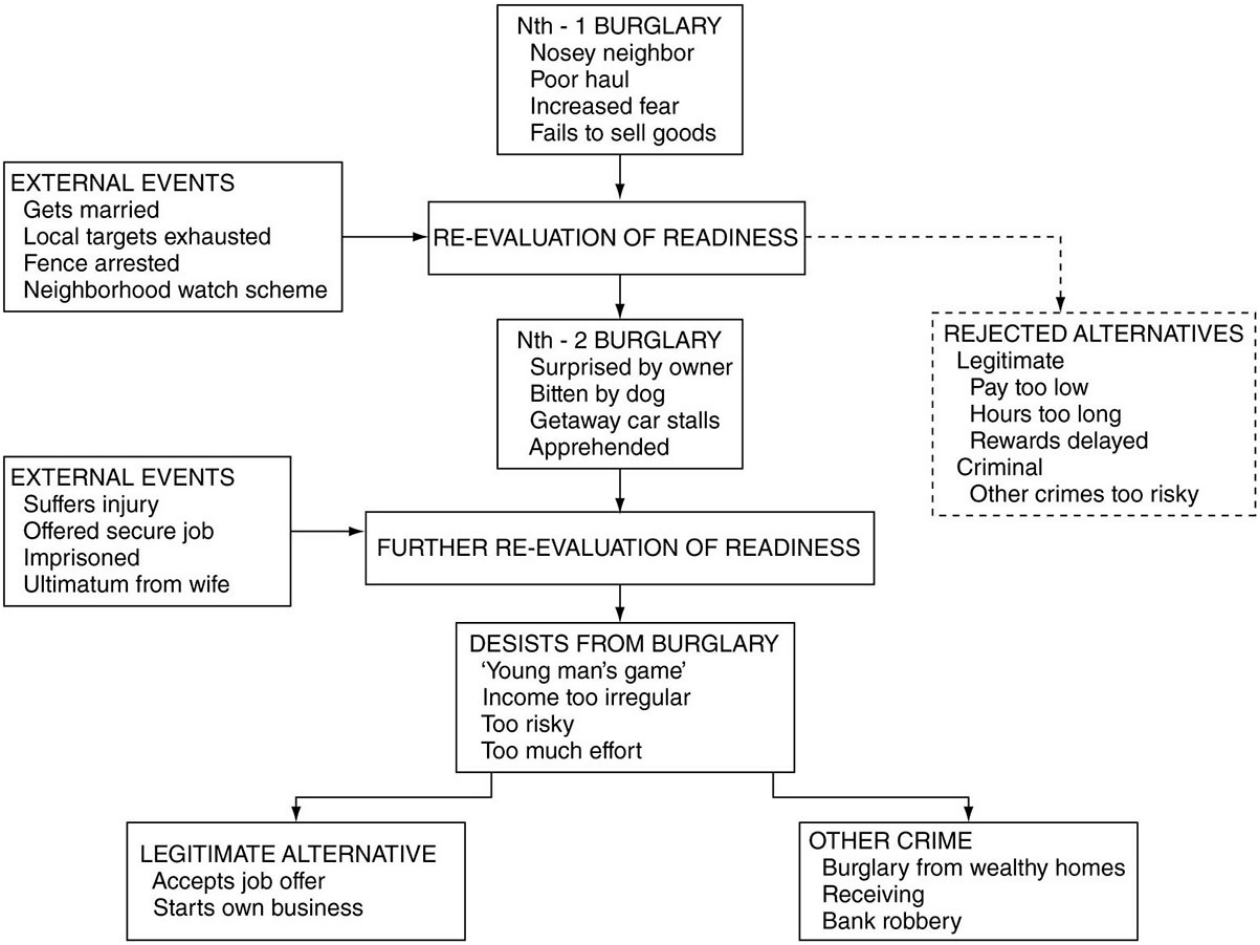


FIGURE 33.4 Desistance Model (example: burglary in a middle-class suburb) Source: *Crime and Justice*, vol. 6. M. Tonry and N. Morris (eds.), University of Chicago Press, 1985. By permission.

These, then, are the main features of the framework that was developed out of our review of recent work in a variety of disciplines that have an interest in crime. It differs from most existing formal theories of criminal behavior, however, in a number of respects. It is true that, like many other criminological theories, the rational choice perspective is intended to provide a framework for understanding all forms of crime. Unlike other approaches, however, which attempt to impose a conceptual unity upon divergent criminal behaviors (by subsuming them under more general concepts such as delinquency, deviance, rule breaking, short-run hedonism, criminality, etc.), our rational choice formulation sees these differences as crucial to the tasks of explanation and control. Unlike existing theories, which tend to concentrate on factors disposing individuals to criminal behavior (the initial involvement model), the rational choice approach, in addition, emphasizes subsequent decisions in the offender's career. Again, whereas most existing theories tend to accord little influence to situational variables, the rational choice approach explicitly recognizes their importance in relation to the criminal event and, furthermore, incorporates similar influences on decisions relating to involvement in crime. In consequence, this perspective also recognizes, as do economic and behaviorist theories, the importance of incentives—that is, of rewards and punishments—and hence the role of learning in the criminal career. Finally, the leitmotif encapsulated in the notion of a "reasoning" offender implies the essentially nonpathological and commonplace nature of much criminal activity....

* Reprinted from Derek B. Cornish and Ronald V. Clarke, “Crime as a Rational Choice” in *The Reasoning Criminal*. Copyright © 1986 by Springer-Verlag. Reprinted by permission of Springer-Verlag.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Does the rational choice perspective assume that offenders carefully plan all crimes?
2. Cornish and Clarke argue that we must employ a "crime-specific focus" when attempting to describe the costs and benefits offenders consider in planning their crimes. Pick two different crimes and describe how the benefits and costs that offenders may consider might differ for these crimes.
3. In discussing "criminal involvement," Cornish and Clarke distinguish between the decisions to become involved in crime, continue in crime, and desist from crime. They state that each of these decisions is influenced by different sets of factors. Describe the factors that might be relevant for each of these decisions.
4. Akers has argued that rational choice theory can be subsumed under his social learning theory (see Chapter 9 in Part III). Do you agree?

34.
Broken Windows*

James Q. Wilson

George L. Kelling

There is a long tradition within criminology—extending to the Chicago school and the work of Shaw and McKay—of attributing high rates of crime in inner-city areas to a breakdown in community control (see Part II). In setting forth their "broken windows" theory, James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling embrace this thesis but then proceed to offer an alternative vision for why informal controls in impoverished areas become ineffective (see also Kelling and Coles, 1996).

Sociological perspectives see community social control as an intervening condition between structural conditions on one side of the causal model and crime on the other side (structural conditions → breakdown of control → high crime rates). Such structural conditions might include the concentration of disadvantage, heterogeneity, racial segregation, family disruption, residential mobility, and/or the loss of industry and jobs. By contrast, Wilson and Kelling remain silent on the importance of these factors and thus implicitly suggest that they do not determine which communities have high rates of crime.

Indeed, Wilson and Kelling imply that structural "root causes" do not distinguish safe from unsafe neighborhoods. For them, communities are not static entities whose decline into a crime-ridden state is compelled by the weight of structural risk factors. Rather, communities are dynamic and amenable to change. Their fate is not foreordained but varies by whether steps are taken to ensure that the small problem of minor misconduct does not escalate into the large problem of serious crime.

Communities thus are like houses that experience a broken window. Consider one house in which a window is smashed, but the owner hurries out to the hardware store and immediately replaces the shattered pane of glass. The house's problem has been fixed, and the message has been sent that the resident is present, takes care of the property, and might be watching for the next vandal. But then consider a second house in which the smashed window is left untended. After a while, the sight of the broken window sends a different message—this time that nobody cares about the upkeep of the house. A rock is tossed through another window. And if this pane of glass is not replaced, pretty soon the house's windows become a target for many rocks thrown by many people.

Wilson and Kelling use this "broken windows" metaphor to outline the process by which neighborhoods spiral into decline. Many inner-city communities are likely to be locations that attract "disreputable" people—rowdy teenagers who congregate on corners and deface buildings with graffiti, panhandlers and prostitutes who approach passersby, the mentally ill who wander the streets and talk to themselves, and those with chronic substance abuse problems who sleep in doorways and urinate in alleys. If the behavior of these disreputable people is allowed to get bothersome—if they are allowed to "take over" public spaces—the neighborhood will descend into a state of disorder.

Disorder is a problem because, like a broken window, it conveys the message that nobody is "home" who cares enough to maintain order. When this occurs, respectable people become fearful to venture into public; they retreat into their residences or move to other communities. Informal social controls thus weaken. Meanwhile more hardened offenders "invade" the area because they realize that this is a place where serious crime elicits little threat of punishment; they will be free, in short, to break as many windows as they wish.

Thus, the causal model suggested by Wilson and Kelling is as follows: disorder → breakdown of control → high crime rates. This model is important because, unlike many criminological theories, it contains a clear blueprint for making communities safer: restore order. This prescription, however, leads to the more exacting question of who is going to curtail disorder. That is, who is going to fix the broken windows?

Wilson and Kelling propose that the police should be the key agents in reestablishing control. To accomplish this task, officers must spend less time racing to crime scenes in vehicles with lights flashing and sirens blaring. Instead, officers need to return to a style of enforcement used by their predecessors in which they walk the beat in neighborhoods, come to know the residents, and personally take steps to maintain order by increasing the certainty of detection and punishment of rule violations. Disreputable people are not to be ignored. Instead, officers would encourage them to "move on" and, when possible, arrest them for minor infractions of the law. The officers' zero tolerance for disruptive conduct would make public spaces orderly and give respectable citizens the confidence once again to take to the streets.

"Broken windows" or "zero-tolerance" policing is controversial on three counts. First, it is not clear that it is effective in reducing serious crime (cf. Kelling and Coles, 1996, with Harcourt, 2001). Second, this approach divides the world into "disreputable" and "respectable" people. It then assumes that it is acceptable to aggressively police this category of bothersome individuals, regardless of the circumstances and personal vulnerabilities that may have led them to become "disreputable" (Harcourt, 2001). Third, by trumpeting the preventative powers of policing, commentators are largely free to ignore the role inequitable structural conditions play in creating and nourishing community decline and crime (Taylor, 2001).

References

Harcourt, Bernard E. 2001. *Illusion of Order: The False Promise of Broken Windows Policing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kelling, George L. and Catherine M. Coles. 1996. *Fixing Broken Windows: Restoring Order and Reducing Crime in Our Communities*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Taylor, Ralph B. 2001. *Breaking Away from Broken Windows: Baltimore Neighborhoods and the Nationwide Fight Against Crime, Grime, Fear, and Decline*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

In the mid-1970s, the state of New Jersey announced a "Safe and Clean Neighborhoods Program," designed to improve the quality of community life in twenty-eight cities. As part of that program, the state provided money to help cities take police officers out of their patrol cars and assign them to walking beats. The governor and other state officials were enthusiastic about using foot patrol as a way of cutting crime, but many police chiefs were skeptical. Foot patrol, in their eyes, had been pretty much discredited. It reduced the mobility of the police, who thus had difficulty responding to citizen calls for service, and it weakened headquarters control over patrol officers.

Many police officers also disliked foot patrol, but for different reasons: it was hard work, it kept them outside on cold, rainy nights, and it reduced their chances for making a "good pinch." In some departments, assigning officers to foot patrol had been used as a form of punishment. And academic experts on policing doubted that foot patrol would

have any impact on crime rates; it was, in the opinion of most, little more than a sop to public opinion. But since the state was paying for it, the local authorities were willing to go along.

Five years after the program started, the Police Foundation, in Washington, D.C., published an evaluation of the foot-patrol project. Based on its analysis of a carefully controlled experiment carried out chiefly in Newark, the foundation concluded, to the surprise of hardly anyone, that foot patrol had not reduced crime rates. But residents of the foot-patrolled neighborhoods seemed to feel more secure than persons in other areas, tended to believe that crime had been reduced, and seemed to take fewer steps to protect themselves from crime (staying at home with the doors locked, for example). Moreover, citizens in the foot-patrol areas had a more favorable opinion of the police than did those living elsewhere. And officers walking beats had higher morale, greater job satisfaction, and a more favorable attitude toward citizens in their neighborhoods than did officers assigned to patrol cars.

These findings may be taken as evidence that the skeptics were right—foot patrol has no effect on crime; it merely fools the citizens into thinking that they are safer. But in our view, and in the view of the authors of the Police Foundation study (of whom Kelling was one), the citizens of Newark were not fooled at all. They knew what the foot-patrol officers were doing, they knew it was different from what motorized officers do, and they knew that having officers walk beats did in fact make their neighborhoods safer.

But how can a neighborhood be "safer" when the crime rate has not gone down—in fact, may have gone up? Finding the answer requires first that we understand what most often frightens people in public places. Many citizens, of course, are primarily frightened by crime, especially crime involving a sudden, violent attack by a stranger. This risk is very real, in Newark as in many large cities. But we tend to overlook or forget another source of fear—the fear of being bothered by disorderly people. Not violent people, nor, necessarily, criminals, but disreputable or obstreperous or unpredictable people: panhandlers, drunks, addicts, rowdy teenagers, prostitutes, loiterers, the mentally disturbed.

What foot-patrol officers did was to elevate, to the extent they could, the level of public order in these neighborhoods. Though the neighborhoods were predominantly black and the foot patrolmen were mostly white, this "order-maintenance" function of the police was performed to the general satisfaction of both parties.

One of us (Kelling) spent many hours walking with Newark foot-patrol officers to see how they defined "order" and what they did to maintain it. One beat was typical: a busy but dilapidated area in the heart of Newark, with many abandoned buildings, marginal shops (several of which prominently displayed knives and straight-edged razors in their windows), one large department store, and, most important, a train station and several major bus stops. Though the area was run-down, its streets were filled with people, because it was a major transportation center. The good order of this area was important not only to those who lived and worked there but also to many others, who had to move through it on their way home, to supermarkets, or to factories.

The people on the street were primarily black; the officer who walked the street was white. The people were made up of "regulars" and "strangers." Regulars included both "decent folk" and some drunks and derelicts who were always there but who "knew their place." Strangers were, well, strangers, and viewed suspiciously, sometimes apprehensively. The officer—call him Kelly—knew who the regulars were, and they knew him. As he saw his job, he was to keep an eye on strangers, and make certain that the disreputable regulars observed some informal but widely understood rules. Drunks and addicts could sit on the stoops, but could not lie down. People could drink on side streets, but not at the main intersection. Bottles had to be in paper bags. Talking to, bothering, or begging from people waiting at the bus stop was strictly forbidden. If a dispute erupted between a businessman and a customer, the businessman was assumed to be right, especially if the customer was a stranger. If a stranger loitered, Kelly would ask him if he had any means of support and what his business was; if he gave unsatisfactory answers, he was

sent on his way. Persons who broke the informal rules, especially those who bothered people waiting at bus stops, were arrested for vagrancy. Noisy teenagers were told to keep quiet.

These rules were defined and enforced in collaboration with the "regulars" on the street. Another neighborhood might have different rules, but these, everybody understood, were the rules for this neighborhood. If someone violated them, the regulars not only turned to Kelly for help but also ridiculed the violator. Sometimes what Kelly did could be described as "enforcing the law," but just as often it involved taking informal or extralegal steps to help protect what the neighborhood had decided was the appropriate level of public order. Some of the things he did probably would not withstand a legal challenge.

A determined skeptic might acknowledge that a skilled foot-patrol officer can maintain order but still insist that this sort of "order" has little to do with the real sources of community fear—that is, with violent crime. To a degree, that is true. But two things must be borne in mind. First, outside observers should not assume that they know how much of the anxiety now endemic in many big-city neighborhoods stems from a fear of "real" crime and how much from a sense that the street is disorderly, a source of distasteful, worrisome encounters. The people of Newark, to judge from their behavior and their remarks to interviewers, apparently assign a high value to public order, and feel relieved and reassured when the police help them maintain that order.

Second, at the community level, disorder and crime are usually inextricably linked, in a kind of developmental sequence. Social psychologists and police officers tend to agree that if a window in a building is broken *and is left unrepaired*, all the rest of the windows will soon be broken. This is as true in nice neighborhoods as in run-down ones. Window-breaking does not necessarily occur on a large scale because some areas are inhabited by determined window-breakers whereas others are populated by window-lovers; rather, one unrepaired broken window is a signal that no one cares, and so breaking more windows costs nothing. (It has always been fun.)

Philip Zimbardo, a Stanford psychologist, reported in 1969 on some experiments testing the broken-window theory. He arranged to have an automobile without license plates parked with its hood up on a street in the Bronx and a comparable automobile on a street in Palo Alto, California. The car in the Bronx was attacked by "vandals" within ten minutes of its "abandonment." The first to arrive were a family—father, mother, and young son—who removed the radiator and battery. Within twenty-four hours, virtually everything of value had been removed. Then random destruction began—windows were smashed, parts torn off, upholstery ripped. Children began to use the car as a playground. Most of the adult "vandals" were well-dressed, apparently clean-cut whites. The car in Palo Alto sat untouched for more than a week. Then Zimbardo smashed part of it with a sledge-hammer. Soon, passersby were joining in. Within a few hours, the car had been turned upside down and utterly destroyed. Again, the "vandals" appeared to be primarily respectable whites.

Untended property becomes fair game for people out for fun or plunder, and even for people who ordinarily would not dream of doing such things and who probably consider themselves law-abiding. Because of the nature of community life in the Bronx—its anonymity, the frequency with which cars are abandoned and things are stolen or broken, the past experience of "no one caring"—vandalism begins much more quickly than it does in staid Palo Alto, where people have come to believe that private possessions are cared for, and that mischievous behavior is costly. But vandalism can occur anywhere once communal barriers—the sense of mutual regard and the obligations of civility—are lowered by actions that seem to signal that "no one cares."

We suggest that "untended" behavior also leads to the breakdown of community controls. A stable neighborhood of families who care for their homes, mind each other's children, and confidently frown on unwanted intruders can change, in a few years or even a few months, to an inhospitable and frightening jungle. A piece of property is abandoned, weeds grow up, a window is smashed. Adults stop scolding rowdy children; the children, emboldened,

become more rowdy. Families move out, unattached adults move in. Teenagers gather in front of the corner store. The merchant asks them to move; they refuse. Fights occur. Litter accumulates. People start drinking in front of the grocery; in time, an inebriate slumps to the sidewalk and is allowed to sleep it off. Pedestrians are approached by panhandlers.

At this point it is not inevitable that serious crime will flourish or violent attacks on strangers will occur. But many residents will think that crime, especially violent crime, is on the rise, and they will modify their behavior accordingly. They will use the streets less often, and when on the streets will stay apart from their fellows, moving with averted eyes, silent lips, and hurried steps. “Don’t get involved.” For some residents, this growing atomization will matter little, because the neighborhood is not their “home” but “the place where they live.” Their interests are elsewhere; they are cosmopolitans. But it will matter greatly to other people, whose lives derive meaning and satisfaction from local attachments rather than worldly involvement; for them, the neighborhood will cease to exist except for a few reliable friends whom they arrange to meet.

Such an area is vulnerable to criminal invasion. Though it is not inevitable, it is more likely that here, rather than in places where people are confident they can regulate public behavior by informal controls, drugs will change hands, prostitutes will solicit, and cars will be stripped. That the drunks will be robbed by boys who do it as a lark, and the prostitutes’ customers will be robbed by men who do it purposefully and perhaps violently. That muggings will occur.

Among those who often find it difficult to move away from this are the elderly. Surveys of citizens suggest that the elderly are much less likely to be the victims of crime than younger persons, and some have inferred from this that the well-known fear of crime voiced by the elderly is an exaggeration: perhaps we ought not to design special programs to protect older persons; perhaps we should even try to talk them out of their mistaken fears. This argument misses the point. The prospect of a confrontation with an obstreperous teenager or a drunken panhandler can be as fear-inducing for defenseless persons as the prospect of meeting an actual robber; indeed, to a defenseless person, the two kinds of confrontation are often indistinguishable. Moreover, the lower rate at which the elderly are victimized is a measure of the steps they have already taken—chiefly, staying behind locked doors—to minimize the risks they face. Young men are more frequently attacked than older women, not because they are easier or more lucrative targets but because they are on the streets more.

Nor is the connection between disorderliness and fear made only by the elderly. Susan Estrich, of the Harvard Law School, has recently gathered together a number of surveys on the sources of public fear. One, done in Portland, Oregon, indicated that three fourths of the adults interviewed cross to the other side of a street when they see a gang of teenagers; another survey, in Baltimore, discovered that nearly half would cross the street to avoid even a single strange youth. When an interviewer asked people in a housing project where the most dangerous spot was, they mentioned a place where young persons gathered to drink and play music, despite the fact that not a single crime had occurred there. In Boston public housing projects, the greatest fear was expressed by persons living in the buildings where disorderliness and incivility, not crime, were the greatest. Knowing this helps one understand the significance of such otherwise harmless displays as subway graffiti. As Nathan Glazer has written, the proliferation of graffiti, even when not obscene, confronts the subway rider with the “inescapable knowledge that the environment he must endure for an hour or more a day is uncontrolled and uncontrollable, and that anyone can invade it to do whatever damage and mischief the mind suggests.”

In response to fear, people avoid one another, weakening controls. Sometimes they call the police. Patrol cars arrive, an occasional arrest occurs, but crime continues and disorder is not abated. Citizens complain to the police chief, but he explains that his department is low on personnel and that the courts do not punish petty or first-time offenders. To the residents, the police who arrive in squad cars are either ineffective or uncaring; to the police, the residents are animals who deserve each other. The citizens may soon stop calling the police, because “they can’t do anything.”

The process we call urban decay has occurred for centuries in every city. But what is happening today is different in at least two important respects. First, in the period before, say, World War II, city dwellers—because of money costs, transportation difficulties, familial and church connections—could rarely move away from neighborhood problems. When movement did occur, it tended to be along public-transit routes. Now mobility has become exceptionally easy for all but the poorest or those who are blocked by racial prejudice. Earlier crime waves had a kind of built-in self-correcting mechanism: the determination of a neighborhood or community to reassert control over its turf. Areas in Chicago, New York, and Boston would experience crime and gang wars, and then normalcy would return, as the families for whom no alternative residences were possible reclaimed their authority over the streets.

Second, the police in this earlier period assisted in that reassertion of authority by acting, sometimes violently, on behalf of the community. Young toughs were roughed up, people were arrested "on suspicion" or for vagrancy, and prostitutes and petty thieves were routed. "Rights" were something enjoyed by decent folk, and perhaps also by the serious professional criminal, who avoided violence and could afford a lawyer.

This pattern of policing was not an aberration or the result of occasional excess. From the earliest days of the nation, the police function was seen primarily as that of a night watchman: to maintain order against the chief threats to order—fire, wild animals, and disreputable behavior. Solving crimes was viewed not as a police responsibility but as a private one. In the March, 1969, *Atlantic*, one of us (Wilson) wrote a brief account of how the police role had slowly changed from maintaining order to fighting crimes. The change began with the creation of private detectives (often ex-criminals), who worked on a contingency-fee basis for individuals who had suffered losses. In time, the detectives were absorbed into municipal police agencies and paid a regular salary; simultaneously, the responsibility for prosecuting thieves was shifted from the aggrieved private citizen to the professional prosecutor. This process was not complete in most places until the twentieth century.

In the 1960s, when urban riots were a major problem, social scientists began to explore carefully the order-maintenance function of the police, and to suggest ways of improving it—not to make streets safer (its original function) but to reduce the incidence of mass violence. Order-maintenance became, to a degree, coterminous with "community relations." But, as the crime wave that began in the early 1960s continued without abatement throughout the decade and into the 1970s, attention shifted to the role of the police as crime-fighters. Studies of police behavior ceased, by and large, to be accounts of the order-maintenance function and became, instead, efforts to propose and test ways whereby the police could solve more crimes, make more arrests, and gather better evidence. If these things could be done, social scientists assumed, citizens would be less fearful.

A great deal was accomplished during this transition, as both police chiefs and outside experts emphasized the crime-fighting function in their plans, in the allocation of resources, and in deployment of personnel. The police may well have become better crime-fighters as a result. And doubtless they remained aware of their responsibility for order. But the link between order-maintenance and crime-prevention, so obvious to earlier generations, was forgotten.

That link is similar to the process whereby one broken window becomes many. The citizen who fears the ill-smelling drunk, the rowdy teenager, or the importuning beggar is not merely expressing his distaste for unseemly behavior; he is also giving voice to a bit of folk wisdom that happens to be a correct generalization—namely, that serious street crime flourishes in areas in which disorderly behavior goes unchecked. The unchecked panhandler is, in effect, the first broken window. Muggers and robbers, whether opportunistic or professional, believe they reduce their chances of being caught or even identified if they operate on streets where potential victims are already intimidated by prevailing conditions. If the neighborhood cannot keep a bothersome panhandler from annoying passersby, the thief may reason, it is even less likely to call the police to identify a potential mugger or to interfere if the mugging actually takes place.

Some police administrators concede that this process occurs, but argue that motorized-patrol officers can deal with it as effectively as foot-patrol officers. We are not so sure. In theory, an officer in a squad car can observe as much as an officer on foot; in theory, the former can talk to as many people as the latter. But the reality of police-citizen encounters is powerfully altered by the automobile. An officer on foot cannot separate himself from the street people; if he is approached, only his uniform and his personality can help him manage whatever is about to happen. And he can never be certain what that will be—a request for directions, a plea for help, an angry denunciation, a teasing remark, a confused babble, a threatening gesture.

In a car, an officer is more likely to deal with street people by rolling down the window and looking at them. The door and the window exclude the approaching citizen; they are a barrier. Some officers take advantage of this barrier, perhaps unconsciously, by acting differently if in the car than they would on foot. We have seen this countless times. The police car pulls up to a corner where teenagers are gathered. The window is rolled down. The officer stares at the youths. They stare back. The officer says to one, "C'mere." He saunters over, conveying to his friends by his elaborately casual style the idea that he is not intimidated by authority. "What's your name?" "Chuck." "Chuck who?" "Chuck Jones." "What'ya doing, Chuck?" "Nothin'." "Got a P. O. [parole officer]?" "Nah." "Sure?" "Yeah." "Stay out of trouble, Chuckie." Meanwhile, the other boys laugh and exchange comments among themselves, probably at the officer's expense. The officer stares harder. He cannot be certain what is being said, nor can he join in and, by displaying his own skill at street banter, prove that he cannot be "put down." In the process, the officer has learned almost nothing, and the boys have decided the officer is an alien force who can safely be disregarded, even mocked.

Our experience is that most citizens like to talk to a police officer. Such exchanges give them a sense of importance, provide them with the basis for gossip, and allow them to explain to the authorities what is worrying them (whereby they gain a modest but significant sense of having "done something" about the problem). You approach a person on foot more easily, and talk to him more readily, than you do a person in a car. Moreover, you can more easily retain some anonymity if you draw an officer aside for a private chat. Suppose you want to pass on a tip about who is stealing handbags, or who offered to sell you a stolen TV. In the inner city, the culprit, in all likelihood, lives nearby. To walk up to a marked patrol car and lean in the window is to convey a visible signal that you are a "fink."

The essence of the police role in maintaining order is to reinforce the informal control mechanisms of the community itself. The police cannot, without committing extraordinary resources, provide a substitute for that informal control. On the other hand, to reinforce those natural forces the police must accommodate them. And therein lies the problem.

Should police activity on the street be shaped, in important ways, by the standards of the neighborhood rather than by the rules of the state? Over the past two decades, the shift of police from order-maintenance to law-enforcement has brought them increasingly under the influence of legal restrictions, provoked by media complaints and enforced by court decisions and departmental orders. As a consequence, the order-maintenance functions of the police are now governed by rules developed to control police relations with suspected criminals. This is, we think, an entirely new development. For centuries, the role of the police as watchmen was judged primarily not in terms of its compliance with appropriate procedures but rather in terms of its attaining a desired objective. The objective was order, an inherently ambiguous term but a condition that people in a given community recognized when they saw it. The means were the same as those the community itself would employ, if its members were sufficiently determined, courageous, and authoritative. Detecting and apprehending criminals, by contrast, was a means to an end, not an end in itself; a judicial determination of guilt or innocence was the hoped-for result of the law-enforcement mode. From the first, the police were expected to follow rules defining that process, though states differed in how stringent the rules should be. The criminal-apprehension process was always understood to involve individual rights, the

violation of which was unacceptable because it meant that the violating officer would be acting as a judge and jury—and that was not his job. Guilt or innocence was to be determined by universal standards under special procedures.

Ordinarily, no judge or jury ever sees the persons caught up in a dispute over the appropriate level of neighborhood order. That is true not only because most cases are handled informally on the street but also because no universal standards are available to settle arguments over disorder, and thus a judge may not be any wiser or more effective than a police officer. Until quite recently in many states, and even today in some places, the police make arrests on such charges as "suspicious person" or "vagrancy" or "public drunkenness"—charges with scarcely any legal meaning. These charges exist not because society wants judges to punish vagrants or drunks but because it wants an officer to have the legal tools to remove undesirable persons from a neighborhood when informal efforts to preserve order in the streets have failed.

Once we begin to think of all aspects of police work as involving the application of universal rules under special procedures, we inevitably ask what constitutes an "undesirable person" and why we should "criminalize" vagrancy or drunkenness. A strong and commendable desire to see that people are treated fairly makes us worry about allowing the police to rout persons who are undesirable by some vague or parochial standard. A growing and not-so-commendable utilitarianism leads us to doubt that any behavior that does not "hurt" another person should be made illegal. And thus many of us who watch over the police are reluctant to allow them to perform, in the only way they can, a function that every neighborhood desperately wants them to perform.

This wish to "decriminalize" disreputable behavior that "harms no one"—and thus remove the ultimate sanction the police can employ to maintain neighborhood order—is, we think, a mistake. Arresting a single drunk or a single vagrant who has harmed no identifiable person seems unjust, and in a sense it is. But failing to do anything about a score of drunks or a hundred vagrants may destroy an entire community. A particular rule that seems to make sense in the individual case makes no sense when it is made a universal rule and applied to all cases. It makes no sense because it fails to take into account the connection between one broken window left untended and a thousand broken windows. Of course, agencies other than the police could attend to the problems posed by drunks or the mentally ill, but in most communities—especially where the "deinstitutionalization" movement has been strong—they do not.

The concern about equity is more serious. We might agree that certain behavior makes one person more undesirable than another, but how do we ensure that age or skin color or national origin or harmless mannerisms will not also become the basis for distinguishing the undesirable from the desirable? How do we ensure, in short, that the police do not become the agents of neighborhood bigotry?

We can offer no wholly satisfactory answer to this important question. We are not confident that there is a satisfactory answer, except to hope that by their selection, training, and supervision, the police will be inculcated with a clear sense of the outer limit of their discretionary authority. That limit, roughly, is this—the police exist to help regulate behavior, not to maintain the racial or ethnic purity of a neighborhood.

Consider the case of the Robert Taylor Homes in Chicago, one of the largest public housing projects in the country. It is home for nearly 20,000 people, all black, and extends over ninety-two acres along South State Street. It was named after a distinguished black who had been, during the 1940s, chairman of the Chicago Housing Authority. Not long after it opened, in 1962, relations between project residents and the police deteriorated badly. The citizens felt that the police were insensitive or brutal; the police, in turn, complained of unprovoked attacks on them. Some Chicago officers tell of times when they were afraid to enter the Homes. Crime rates soared.

Today, the atmosphere has changed. Police-citizen relations have improved—apparently, both sides learned something from the earlier experience. Recently, a boy stole a purse and ran off. Several young persons who saw the

theft voluntarily passed along to the police information on the identity and residence of the thief, and they did this publicly, with friends and neighbors looking on. But problems persist, chief among them the presence of youth gangs that terrorize residents and recruit members in the project. The people expect the police to "do something" about this, and the police are determined to do just that.

But do what? Though the police can obviously make arrests whenever a gang member breaks the law, a gang can form, recruit, and congregate without breaking the law. And only a tiny fraction of gang-related crimes can be solved by an arrest; thus, if an arrest is the only recourse for the police, the residents' fears will go unassuaged. The police will soon feel helpless, and the residents will again believe that the police "do nothing." What the police in fact do is to chase known gang members out of the project. In the words of one officer, "We kick ass." Project residents both know and approve of this. The tacit police-citizen alliance in the project is reinforced by the police view that the cops and the gangs are the two rival sources of power in the area, and that the gangs are not going to win.

None of this is easily reconciled with any conception of due process or fair treatment. Since both residents and gang members are black, race is not a factor. But it could be. Suppose a white project confronted a black gang, or vice versa. We would be apprehensive about the police taking sides. But the substantive problem remains the same: how can the police strengthen the informal social-control mechanisms of natural communities in order to minimize fear in public places? Law enforcement, per se, is no answer. A gang can weaken or destroy a community by standing about in a menacing fashion and speaking rudely to passersby without breaking the law.

We have difficulty thinking about such matters, not simply because the ethical and legal issues are so complex but because we have become accustomed to thinking of the law in essentially individualistic terms. The law defines *my* rights, punishes *his* behavior, and is applied by *that* officer because of *this* harm. We assume, in thinking this way, that what is good for the individual will be good for the community, and what doesn't matter when it happens to one person won't matter if it happens to many. Ordinarily, those are plausible assumptions. But in cases where behavior that is tolerable to one person is intolerable to many others, the reactions of the others—fear, withdrawal, flight—may ultimately make matters worse for everyone, including the individual who first professed his indifference.

It may be their greater sensitivity to communal as opposed to individual needs that helps explain why the residents of small communities are more satisfied with their police than are the residents of similar neighborhoods in big cities. Elinor Ostrom and her co-workers at Indiana University compared the perception of police services in two poor, all-black Illinois towns—Phoenix and East Chicago Heights—with those of three comparable all-black neighborhoods in Chicago. The level of criminal victimization and the quality of police-community relations appeared to be about the same in the towns and the Chicago neighborhoods. But the citizens living in their own villages were much more likely than those living in the Chicago neighborhoods to say that they do not stay at home for fear of crime, to agree that the local police have "the right to take any action necessary" to deal with problems, and to agree that the police "look out for the needs of the average citizen." It is possible that the residents and the police of the small towns saw themselves as engaged in a collaborative effort to maintain a certain standard of communal life, whereas those of the big city felt themselves to be simply requesting and supplying particular services on an individual basis.

If this is true, how should a wise police chief deploy his meager forces? The first answer is that nobody knows for certain, and the most prudent course of action would be to try further variations on the Newark experiment, to see more precisely what works in what kinds of neighborhoods. The second answer is also a hedge—many aspects of order-maintenance in neighborhoods can probably best be handled in ways that involve the police minimally, if at all. A busy, bustling shopping center and a quiet, well-tended suburb may need almost no visible police presence. In both cases, the ratio of respectable to disreputable people is ordinarily so high as to make informal social control effective.

Even in areas that are in jeopardy from disorderly elements, citizen action without substantial police involvement may be sufficient. Meetings between teenagers who like to hang out on a particular corner and adults who want to use that corner might well lead to an amicable agreement on a set of rules about how many people can be allowed to congregate, where, and when.

Where no understanding is possible—or if possible, not observed—citizen patrols may be a sufficient response. There are two traditions of communal involvement in maintaining order. One, that of the "community watchmen," is as old as the first settlement of the New World. Until well into the nineteenth century, volunteer watchmen, not policemen, patrolled their communities to keep order. They did so, by and large, without taking the law into their own hands—without, that is, punishing persons or using force. Their presence deterred disorder or alerted the community to disorder that could not be deterred. There are hundreds of such efforts today in communities all across the nation. Perhaps the best known is that of the Guardian Angels, a group of unarmed young persons in distinctive berets and T-shirts, who first came to public attention when they began patrolling the New York City subways but who claim now to have chapters in more than thirty American cities. Unfortunately, we have little information about the effect of these groups on crime. It is possible, however, that whatever their effect on crime, citizens find their presence reassuring, and that they thus contribute to maintaining a sense of order and civility.

The second tradition is that of the "vigilante." Rarely a feature of the settled communities of the East, it was primarily to be found in those frontier towns that grew up in advance of the reach of government. More than 350 vigilante groups are known to have existed; their distinctive feature was that their members did take the law into their own hands, by acting as judge, jury, and often executioner as well as policeman. Today, the vigilante movement is conspicuous by its rarity, despite the great fear expressed by citizens that the older cities are becoming "urban frontiers." But some community-watchmen groups have skirted the line, and others may cross it in the future. An ambiguous case, reported in the *Wall Street Journal*, involved a citizens' patrol in the Silver Lake area of Belleville, New Jersey. A leader told the reporter, "We look for outsiders." If a few teenagers from outside the neighborhood enter it, "we ask them their business," he said. "If they say they're going down the street to see Mrs. Jones, fine, we let them pass. But then we follow them down the block to make sure they're really going to see Mrs. Jones."

Though citizens can do a great deal, the police are plainly the key to order-maintenance. For one thing, many communities, such as the Robert Taylor Homes, cannot do the job by themselves. For another, no citizen in a neighborhood, even an organized one, is likely to feel the sense of responsibility that wearing a badge confers. Psychologists have done many studies on why people fail to go to the aid of persons being attacked or seeking help, and they have learned that the cause is not "apathy" or "selfishness" but the absence of some plausible grounds for feeling that one must personally accept responsibility. Ironically, avoiding responsibility is easier when a lot of people are standing about. On streets and in public places, where order is so important, many people are likely to be "around," a fact that reduces the chance of any one person acting as the agent of the community. The police officer's uniform singles him out as a person who must accept responsibility if asked. In addition, officers, more easily than their fellow citizens, can be expected to distinguish between what is necessary to protect the safety of the street and what merely protects its ethnic purity.

But the police forces of America are losing, not gaining, members. Some cities have suffered substantial cuts in the number of officers available for duty. These cuts are not likely to be reversed in the near future. Therefore, each department must assign its existing officers with great care. Some neighborhoods are so demoralized and crime-ridden as to make foot patrol useless; the best the police can do with limited resources is respond to the enormous number of calls for service. Other neighborhoods are so stable and serene as to make foot patrol unnecessary. The key is to identify neighborhoods at the tipping point—where the public order is deteriorating but not unreclaimable,

where the streets are used frequently but by apprehensive people, where a window is likely to be broken at any time, and must quickly be fixed if all are not to be shattered.

Most police departments do not have ways of systematically identifying such areas and assigning officers to them. Officers are assigned on the basis of crime rates (meaning that marginally threatened areas are often stripped so that police can investigate crimes in areas where the situation is hopeless) or on the basis of calls for service (despite the fact that most citizens do not call the police when they are merely frightened or annoyed). To allocate patrol wisely, the department must look at the neighborhoods and decide, from first-hand evidence, where an additional officer will make the greatest difference in promoting a sense of safety.

One way to stretch limited police resources is being tried in some public-housing projects. Tenant organizations hire off-duty police officers for patrol work in their buildings. The costs are not high (at least not per resident), the officer likes the additional income, and the residents feel safer. Such arrangements are probably more successful than hiring private watchmen, and the Newark experiment helps us understand why. A private security guard may deter crime or misconduct by his presence, and he may go to the aid of persons needing help, but he may well not intervene—that is, control or drive away—someone challenging community standards. Being a sworn officer—a "real cop"—seems to give one the confidence, the sense of duty, and the aura of authority necessary to perform this difficult task.

Patrol officers might be encouraged to go to and from duty stations on public transportation and, while on the bus or subway car, enforce rules about smoking, drinking, disorderly conduct, and the like. The enforcement need involve nothing more than ejecting the offender (the offense, after all, is not one with which a booking officer or a judge wishes to be bothered). Perhaps the random but relentless maintenance of standards on buses would lead to conditions on buses that approximate the level of civility we now take for granted on airplanes.

But the most important requirement is to think that to maintain order in precarious situations is a vital job. The police know this is one of their functions, and they also believe, correctly, that it cannot be done to the exclusion of criminal investigation and responding to calls. We may have encouraged them to suppose, however, on the basis of our oft-repeated concerns about serious, violent crime, that they will be judged exclusively on their capacity as crime-fighters. To the extent that this is the case, police administrators will continue to concentrate police personnel in the highest-crime areas (though not necessarily in the areas most vulnerable to criminal invasion), emphasize their training in the law and criminal apprehension (and not their training in managing street life), and join too quickly in campaigns to decriminalize "harmless" behavior (though public drunkenness, street prostitution, and pornographic displays can destroy a community more quickly than any team of professional burglars).

Above all, we must return to our long-abandoned view that the police ought to protect communities as well as individuals. Our crime statistics and victimization surveys measure individual losses, but they do not measure communal losses. Just as physicians now recognize the importance of fostering health rather than simply treating illness, so the police—and the rest of us—ought to recognize the importance of maintaining, intact, communities without broken windows.

---

* Copyright © 1982 by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, "Broken Windows," *The Atlantic Monthly*, 249(3), pp. 29–38. Reprinted with permission.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe a community that is orderly. How does it differ from a community that is disorderly? What are the social and physical characteristics that would prompt you to define a neighborhood as disorderly?
2. According to Wilson and Kelling, how is disorder related to serious crime? How is this relationship captured by the "broken windows" metaphor that they use?
3. How does Wilson and Kelling's "broken windows" theory of crime compare with the community-based theories in Part II of this book (recall the Chicago school)? If you were to diagram the theories, how would their causal models differ? In turn, how might their policy recommendations differ?
4. What is "broken windows policing"? Is the emphasis on crime fighting or is it on order maintenance? Why? Even if this approach is effective, do you think it is fair to concentrate police attention—including arrests for minor infractions—on the different types of people that would be considered "disreputable" and disorderly?
5. Do you think that Wilson and Kelling's use of the phrase "broken windows" contributed to the popularity of their theory?

35.
Procedural Justice Theory*

Tom R. Tyler

Tyler (2004) offers an explanation for why people comply with legal authorities, and the law more generally, that departs from traditional deterrence theory. Tyler is skeptical of the deterrence argument that people comply because of instrumental concerns about the risk of arrest and punishment. Instead, he suggests that compliance and conformity are linked to personal orientations regarding whether actions on the part of legal authorities, especially police, are appropriate and just. If police and other criminal justice agents are thought to act in a fair and impartial manner during encounters with citizens, then people are likely to perceive such agents, and the law more generally, as legitimate. In turn, perceived legitimacy of law and legal agents engenders greater levels of voluntary compliance with the law and cooperation with authorities. As Tyler (2004: 87) suggests, "People, in other words, feel responsible for following the directives of legitimate authorities." Conversely, perceived illegitimacy of the law and legal agents increases the likelihood of disobedient behavior, including uncooperative or illegal actions. People feel much less obligation to follow the directives of illegitimate authorities.

To provide more detail, Tyler (2004: 91) suggests that, when making assessments about the legitimacy of legal authorities, citizens are not that concerned with the authorities' overall effectiveness in combatting crime or to the "valence or fairness of the outcomes they deliver." Instead, judgements about legitimacy are more strongly rooted in perceptions of procedural justice—ideas about the appropriateness and rightfulness of the manner *in which legal agents exercise authority. In this regard, various procedural aspects of the conduct of legal authorities are considered: Do legal authorities appear motivated to be honest? To behave in a fair, unbiased, respectful, and ethical manner? To make quality, informed decisions? To provide opportunities for citizens' concerns to be voiced? If the answers to such questions are "yes," then people are more willing to voluntary accept the decisions of authorities and abide accordingly.*

Tyler (2004) summarizes by suggesting that there are four key elements to judgements about procedural justice: (1) participation—people want to provide input in situations in which legal authority is being exercised; (2) neutrality—people want objectivity and evenhandedness, not bias, from legal authorities; (3) quality interpersonal treatment—people want to be treated with respect and dignity during legal processes; and (4) trustworthiness—people want to know that authorities have benevolent motives, based on concern for the well-being of those involved in legal matters. Overall, procedural justice theory suggests that judgements of procedural justice enhance perceived legitimacy of legal authorities. In turn, perceived legitimacy results in greater compliance.

Tyler (2004) cites a large number of studies that provide support for aspects of procedural justice theory, such as research indicating that individuals who experience procedural justice during encounters with police were more likely to accept police decisions (Tyler and Huo, 2002) and less likely to commit future offenses (Paternoster et al., 1997). More recent work continues to support procedural justice theory, particularly supporting the theory's posited indirect effect on compliance through perceived legitimacy of authorities. For example, a study of serious adolescent offenders by Kaiser and Reisig (2019) showed that personal experiences of positive procedural in encounters with police and courts were related to between-individual differences in offending. Specifically, positive

judgements were associated with less involvement in criminal offending, with much of the effect mediated by perceived legitimacy of criminal justice authorities. The same study considered both personal and vicarious procedural justice judgements and found both to be influential. Positive vicarious procedural justice judgments (i.e., the view that others are treated fairly by police and courts) was associated with lower levels of offending, net of the effect of police legitimacy.

References

Kaiser, Kimberly and Michael D. Reisig. 2019. "Legal Socialization and Self-Reported Criminal Offending: The Role of Procedural Justice and Legal Orientations." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **35**: 135–154.

Paternoster, Raymond, Ronet Bachman, Robert Brame, and Lawrence W. Sherman. 1997. "Do Fair Procedures Matter? The Effect of Procedural Justice on Spouse Assault." *Law and Society Review* **31**: 163–204.

Tyler, Tom R. and Yuen Huo. 2002. *Trust in the Law: Encouraging Public Cooperation with the Police and Courts*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

One way to approach the relationship between the police and the public is to consider how the public impacts on the effectiveness of the police in their efforts to combat crime and maintain social order. Traditional discussions of the effective exercise of legal authority have focused on the ability of legal authorities to shape the behavior of the people within the communities they police. The ability of the police to secure compliance with their directives and with the law more generally—the ability to be authoritative—is widely identified as one key indicator of their viability as authorities (Easton 1975; Fuller 1971). To be effective as maintainers of social order, in other words, the police must be widely obeyed (Tyler 1990). This obedience must occur both during personal encounters between police officers and members of the public (Tyler and Huo 2002) and in people's everyday law-related behavior (Tyler 1990).

While compliance is widespread, it can never be taken for granted. Studies of policing suggest that "although deference to legal authorities is the norm, disobedience occurs with sufficient frequency that skill in handling the rebellious, the disgruntled, and the hard to manage—or those potentially so—have become the street officer's performance litmus test" (Mastrofski, Snipes, and Supina 1996, 272; also see Sherman 1993). Studies of police encounters with members of the public suggest overall noncompliance rates of around 20 percent (Mastrofski, Snipes, and Supina 1996; McCluskey, Mastrofski, and Parks 1999).

Furthermore, it is difficult to gain compliance solely via the threat of use or force (Tyler 1990, 1997b, 1997c). The police need for people to both accept their decisions and follow the law at least in part because they choose to do so (Easton 1975; Parsons 1967; Sarat 1977; Tyler 1990). Why is such voluntary compliance important? Although the police represent the threat of force and carry guns and clubs with them, it is impractical for the police to be everywhere all of the time. The police must rely upon widespread, voluntary law-abiding behavior to allow them to concentrate their resources on those people and situations in which compliance is difficult to obtain. This is first true in personal encounters. When people comply in the immediate presence of the police but later return to noncompliance (since "citizens who acquiesce at the scene can renege": Mastrofski, Snipes, and Supina 1996, 283), the police have difficulty maintaining order in the long term. In addition, the people in the community need to defer to the law in their everyday behavior. When people widely ignore the law, the resources of the police quickly become inadequate to the maintenance of order. In both situations, the police benefit from widespread, voluntary deference.

In addition to the importance of gaining compliance with the law, more recent discussions of crime and social disorder emphasize the important role of public cooperation to the success of police efforts to fight crime by preventing crime and disorder and bringing offenders to account for wrongdoing (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997). The public supports the police by helping to identify criminals and by reporting crimes. In addition, members of the public help the police by joining together in informal efforts to combat crime and address community

problems, whether it is by working in “neighborhood watch” organizations or by attending community-police meetings. As was the case with compliance, these cooperative efforts are largely voluntary in character, and the police are not generally in a position to reward members of the public for their aid. Instead, the police rely on willing public cooperation with police efforts to control crime and community disorder.

---

* Reprinted with permission from: Tom R. Tyler. 2004. Enhancing police legitimacy. *The ANNALS of' the American Association of Political and Social Science*. 593: 84–99

Legitimacy

The value of voluntary cooperation and support from the public raises the question of how such cooperation and support can be created and maintained (Tyler and Blader 2000). Traditionally, the focus in policing has been on instrumental models of policing. For example, compliance with the law has been viewed as being motivated through the creation of a credible risk that people will be caught and punished for wrongdoing, that is, "by manipulating an individual's calculus regarding whether crime pays in the particular instance" (Meares 2000, 396). Similarly, public cooperation in fighting crime is motivated by evidence that the police are performing effectively in their efforts to control crime and urban disorder.

Evidence suggests that these instrumental perspectives are inadequate models with which to explain public cooperation. In the case of sanction threat and compliance, the findings of research support the argument that sanction risks do shape compliance behavior (Nagin 1998), but the magnitude of their influence is typically small. For example, based on a review of research on the influence of deterrence on drug use, MacCoun (1993) estimates that variations in the certainty and severity of punishment account for only approximately 5 percent in the variance in drug-related behavior, a finding consistent with the suggestion of Paternoster (1987) that "perceived certainty [of punishment] plays virtually no role in explaining deviant/criminal conduct (191)" (also see Paternoster et al. 1983). The low level of this relationship may be due to the difficulties that the police have bringing the risk of being caught and punished for wrongdoing to high-enough levels to effectively influence public behavior (Ross 1982; Robinson and Darley 1995, 1997). This evidence suggests that deterrence is an inadequate basis for securing compliance with the law.

In the case of police effectiveness in fighting crime, evidence suggests that police innovations in the management of police services may have contributed to the widespread declines in crime reported in major American cities during recent decades (Kelling and Coles 1996; Silverman 1999). Furthermore, indicators show increasing professionalism in policing, including declining rates of complaints against the police and lower levels of excessive police use of force against community residents. However, studies of the public and public views about and cooperation with the police suggest that the public's reactions to the police are again only loosely linked to police effectiveness in fighting crime, suggesting that police performance is an insufficient basis for gaining the cooperation of the public.

How can the police encourage public cooperation and support? To base an effective strategy for encouraging cooperation, people need to have additional reasons for cooperating beyond instrumental assessments of police performance. One alternative perspective is linked to the recognition that people have internalized values upon which the police might draw to secure compliance and to gain cooperation (Sherman 1993; Tyler 1990). A key value that people hold is their widespread support for the legitimacy of the police—the belief that the police are entitled to call upon the public to follow the law and help combat crime and that members of the public have an obligation to engage in cooperative behaviors. When people feel that an authority is legitimate, they authorize that authority to determine what their behavior will be within a given set of situations. Such an authorization of an authority "seem[s] to carry automatic justification.... Behaviorally, authorization obviates the necessity of making judgments or choices. Not only do normal moral principles become inoperative, but—particularly when the actions are explicitly ordered—a different type of morality, linked to duty to obey superior orders, tends to take over" (Kelman and Hamilton 1989,16). People, in other words, feel responsible for following the directives of legitimate authorities (French and Raven 1959; Merelman 1966)....

A legitimacy-based strategy of policing increases cooperation with the law by drawing on people's feelings of responsibility and obligation. The advantage of such a strategy lies in its ability to facilitate voluntary cooperation. To the degree that cooperation is motivated by personal values, it is self-regulatory and does not depend upon the ability of the authorities to effectively deploy incentives or sanctions to secure desired public behavior. In such a society, only minimal levels of societal resources are needed to maintain social order, and those resources can be redirected toward meeting other needs (Tyler 2001a; Tyler and Darley 2000). Furthermore, such voluntary deference is more reliable than instrumentally motivated compliance because it does not vary as a function of the circumstances or situation involved. Driving up to a stop sign on a deserted road at night, internal values motivate a person to stop, even when the possibility of punishment for law-breaking behavior is minimal....

Legitimacy might also have an important influence on everyday compliance with the law. Much of peoples' law-related behavior occurs outside the immediate presence of legal authorities, although some possibility of sanctions always exists. Theories of legitimacy predict that in such settings, people's feelings of obligation will shape their behavior, leading to deference to the law. Tyler (1990) tested this argument in a study of the attitudes and behaviors of the residents of Chicago. He found that legitimacy has a significant influence on the degree to which people obeyed the law. Furthermore, that influence was distinct from and greater in magnitude than the influence of estimates of the likelihood of being caught and punished for wrongdoing. These findings suggest that as predicted by theories of legitimacy, people's views about the legitimacy of authorities influence the degree to which people obey the law in their everyday lives....

Enhancing Police Legitimacy: The Influence of Procedural Justice

Given the important role that legitimacy can play in determining the level of public cooperation with the police, it is important to try to understand how the police shape public views about their legitimacy. Public views about the legitimacy of the police might, for example, be the result of public assessments of police performance, in terms of either the ability of the police to create a credible sanction risk for wrongdoers or the effectiveness of the police in fighting crime and urban disorder. To the extent that this is true, the already-outlined importance of legitimacy would not have new or novel implications for policing. To enhance their legitimacy, the police would need to effectively combat crime and apprehend wrongdoers.

An alternative perspective on legitimacy is provided by the literature on procedural justice. That literature argues that the legitimacy of authorities and institutions is rooted in public views about the appropriateness of the manner in which the police exercise their authority. In other words, people are viewed as evaluating authorities by assessing whether they use fair procedures when engaging in policing activities. These procedural judgments are distinct from judgments about the effectiveness, valence, or fairness of the outcomes of those activities.

As in the case of legitimacy, the key empirical issue is whether people consider procedural-justice issues when making inferences about the legitimacy of the police. Studies of people's evaluations of all types of authorities—police officers, judges, political leaders, managers, and teachers—have all provided strong support for the basic procedural-justice argument. When people are dealing with authorities or institutions, their evaluations of legitimacy are primarily linked to assessments of the fairness of the authority's or the institution's procedures. Such procedural-justice assessments are consistently found to be more strongly linked to legitimacy judgments than are the evaluations of their effectiveness or the valence or fairness of the outcomes they deliver (Lind and Tyler 1988; Tyler 1990, 2000a; Tyler et al. 1997; Tyler and Smith 1997).

In the case of personal experiences, studies find that when authorities act in ways that people experience as being fair, people are more willing to voluntarily accept the authorities' decisions (Kitzman and Emery 1993; Lind et al. 1993; MacCoun et al. 1988; Wissler 1995). These field studies confirm the findings of the earlier experimental findings of social psychological research (Thibaut and Walker 1975). Procedural-justice judgments are found to have an especially important role in shaping adherence to agreements over time. Pruitt et al. (1993) studied the factors leading those involved in disputes to adhere to mediation agreements over time and found that the procedural fairness of the initial mediation setting was a central determinant of adherence six months later. A second study suggested that procedural justice encourages long-term obedience to the law. Paternoster et al. (1997) found that spouse abusers were less likely to commit future abuses when they experienced procedural justice with the police during an initial encounter.

These findings also receive support in the context of encounters between police and members of the public. Tyler and Huo (2002) found that procedural-justice judgments shaped people's willingness to accept the decisions made by police officers and are more important than are judgments about the favorability or fairness of the outcomes of the encounter. Similarly, Mastrofski, Snipes, and Supina (1996) and McCluskey, Mastrofski, and Parks (1999) found that the experience of disrespect from the police reduces compliance. This is consistent with the finding by Casper, Tyler, and Fisher (1988) that the satisfaction of felony defendants with their experiences with the police and courts was strongly linked to their assessments of the fairness of the process by which their cases were handled.

In a recent study of police encounters with community residents in two American cities that involved both interviews and observational analysis, McCluskey (2003) used a wide variety of indicators of procedural justice and found that five aspects of procedural justice influenced the willingness to comply with police requests for self-control. In particular, he found that holding all else constant, citizens who receive respectful treatment from authorities are almost twice as likely to comply, and those receiving disrespectful treatment are nearly twice as likely to rebel. If the citizen's voice is terminated by the police they are more than twice as likely to rebel against the police request for self-control. If the police demonstrate their commitment to making an informed decision by seeking information about the presenting situation, citizens are more than twice as likely to comply with the phase 1 request for self-control (p. 91).

The impact of procedural justice is greatest early in the encounter, and at that time, "the likelihood of citizen compliance is strongly affected by procedurally just tactics" (p. 114).

These findings suggest that procedural justice has a broad impact upon people's reactions to their experiences with the police. In particular, people's willingness to buy into and voluntarily accept decisions that may require them to accept outcomes that they do not want, or to engage in self-control over their actions, is enhanced by the judgment that one has been treated fairly by the police. Furthermore, evidence shows that this deference continues over time and shapes people's law-related behavior in the future. These findings suggest that the procedural justice that members of the public experience during their personal encounters with the police has both immediate and long-term behavior effects. It is also important to note, however, that procedural justice is not always found to be important. For example, MeClusky (2003) did not find that procedural justice mattered when people were stopped by the police on the street and asked for identification, and Hickman and Simpson (2003) found that receiving procedurally fair treatment from the police did not encourage the victims of domestic violence to report future violent incidents to the police. Hence, procedural justice often, but not always, facilitates favorable reactions to policing activities.

Research further suggests that procedural justice during a personal encounter with the police influences views about the legitimacy of the police. Tyler (1990) demonstrated that the procedural justice of a personal experience with the police shaped general views about the legitimacy of the law, a finding replicated by Tyler and Huo (2002). Similarly, Tyler, Casper, and Fisher (1989) found that the procedural justice of their case disposition process shaped the views of felony defendants about the legitimacy of the criminal justice system and of the law.

More recently, Barnes (1999) has examined the influence of procedural justice in a Reintegrative Shaming Experiments (RISE)–based study of 900 Australians arrested for intoxicated driving. In a field experiment, these drivers had their cases referred to traditional courts or diversionary conferences. These conferences, designed using restorative-justice ideals, were viewed by participants as procedurally fairer. As procedural-justice models would predict, those who attended such conferences expressed more positive views about the legitimacy of the legal system than did those who went to court. They also expressed stronger intentions to obey the law in the future. Whether these differences lead to differences in actual behavior over time is unclear (Sherman 2003).

Of course, not all members of the community have personal contact with the police. It is also important to consider people's general views about the police and policing activities in their communities. Based upon a secondary analysis of prior surveys, Tyler (2001b) argued that procedural-justice judgments play a central role in shaping people's views about the legitimacy of the police and the courts. The findings of the four surveys reviewed by Tyler (2001b) suggest that people consider both performance in controlling crime and procedural fairness when evaluating the police and the courts. The major factor, however, is consistently found to be the fairness of the manner in which the police and the courts are believed to treat citizens. For example, in a study of Oakland residents living in high-crime areas, it was found that the primary factor shaping overall evaluations of the police was the quality of their treatment of

community residents (which explained 26 percent of the unique variance in evaluations), with a secondary influence of performance evaluations (which explained 5 percent of the unique variance).

Sunshine and Tyler (2003) find support for this argument in two surveys of the residents of New York City. In both studies, the key antecedent of legitimacy was procedural justice. Those community residents who thought that the police exercised their authority in fair ways were also more willing to comply with the law and to cooperate with the police. Even in more coercive settings, like prisons, cooperation is found to be linked to procedural justice (Sparks, Bottoms, and Hay 1996).

What Is Procedural Justice?

Studies have identified a wide variety of issues that influence the degree to which people evaluate a procedure's fairness. Furthermore, it has been found that the importance of procedural criteria varies depending upon the setting (Tyler 1988). However, studies consistently point to several elements as key to people's procedural-justice judgments.

Participation is one key element. People are more satisfied with procedures that allow them to participate by explaining their situations and communicating their views about situations to authorities. This participation effect explains, for example, why mediation procedures are popular (Adler, Hensler, and Nelson 1983; McEwen and Maiman 1981) and settlement conferences are not (Lind et al. 1990). It suggests to police officers the importance of allowing people to have input before they make decisions about how to handle a problem. Interestingly, being able to control the outcome is not central to feeling that one is participating (Heinz and Kerstetter 1979). What people want is to feel that their input has been solicited and considered by decision makers, who can then frame their concerns into an appropriate resolution (Conley and O'Barr 1990).

A second key element is neutrality. People think that decisions are being more fairly made when authorities are unbiased and make their decisions using objective indicators, not personal views. As a consequence, evidence of evenhandedness and objectivity enhances perceived fairness. Basically, people are seeking a level playing field in which no one is unfairly advantaged. Because people are seldom in a position to know what the correct or reasonable outcome is, they focus on evidence that the decision-making procedures by which outcomes are arrived at show evidence of fairness. Transparency provides an opportunity to make that judgment, while evidence of factuality and lack of bias suggest that those procedures are fair.

Third, people value being treated with dignity and respect by legal authorities. The quality of interpersonal treatment is consistently found to be a distinct element of fairness, separate from the quality of the decision-making process. Above and beyond the resolution of their problems, people value being treated with politeness and having their rights acknowledged. The importance of interpersonal treatment is emphasized in studies of alternative dispute resolution procedures, which suggest that people value evidence that authorities "took the litigants and the dispute seriously," "after all, the trial was in all likelihood one of the most meticulous, most individualized interactions that the litigant had ever experienced in the course of his or her contacts with government agencies" (Lind et al. 1990). Their treatment during this experience carries for them important messages concerning their social status, their self-worth, and their self-respect. In other words, reaffirming one's sense of his or her standing in the community, especially in the wake of events that demean status, such as crime victimization or being publicly stopped and questioned by the police, can be a key issue to people dealing with legal authorities.

Finally, people feel that procedures are fairer when they trust the motives of decision makers. If, for example, people believe that authorities care about their well-being and are considering their needs and concerns, they view procedures as fairer. People are seldom able to judge the actions of authorities with specialized expertise (doctors, judges, police officers, etc.) since people lack the training and experience to know if the actions taken were reasonable and sufficient. Hence, they depend heavily upon their inferences about the intentions of the authority. If the authorities are viewed as having acted out of a sincere and benevolent concern for those involved, people infer that the authorities' actions were fair. Authorities can encourage people to view them as trustworthy by explaining

their decisions and justifying and accounting for their conduct in ways that make clear their concern about giving attention to people's needs.

Why is trust such a key issue? Tyler (1990) found that the people he interviewed acknowledged that unfair treatment was widespread when people dealt with the police and courts. Nonetheless, over 90 percent predicted that if they had contact with the police or courts in the future, they would receive fair treatment. People, in other words, have a strong desire to view the authorities as benevolent and caring. This view is directly tested during a personal encounter with those authorities, and people's views are powerfully shaped by whether they do, in fact, receive the behavior they expect from the police or courts.

Ethnic Group Differences

These findings suggest that the roots of public trust and confidence in the police lie in public views about how the police exercise their authority. Given the already-noted ethnic group differences in trust and confidence, it is important to consider whether the argument outlined applies equally to the members of all ethnic groups.

Tyler and Huo (2002) address this issue directly in their study of the acceptance of decisions made by the police. Their findings suggest that procedural justice is an equally important issue to the members of three major ethnic groups: whites, African Americans, and Hispanies. Tyler (1994, 2000b) suggests that this finding is broader in scope. His analysis suggests that the importance of procedural justice is maintained across ethnicity, gender, income, education, age, ideology, and political party. As a result, a process-based approach to policing is an ideal way to bridge ethnic and other social divisions in society.

The Idea of a Law-abiding Society

The distinction between risk/gain estimates, performance evaluations, and legitimacy as antecedents of behavior highlights the possibility of two types of legal culture. The first is a culture that builds public compliance on the basis of peoples judgments about police performance. Such a society depends upon the ability of legal authorities to create and maintain a credible presence by combating crime and punishing wrongdoers. The studies outlined demonstrate that while instrumental issues are important, it is difficult for legal authorities to sustain a viable legal system simply based upon performance.

The important role played by legitimacy in shaping people's law-related behavior indicates the possibility of creating a law-abiding society in which citizens have the internal values that lead to voluntary deference to the law and to the decisions of legal authorities such as the police. Such a society is based upon the willing consent and cooperation of citizens. That cooperation develops from people's own feelings about appropriate social behavior and is not linked to the risks of apprehension and punishment or to the estimates of the nature and magnitude of the crime problem that people estimate to exist in their social environment. Tyler (2001a) refers to such a society as a law-abiding society The studies outlined make clear that such a society is possible in the sense that if people think authorities are legitimate, they are more likely to obey and to cooperate with authorities (Tyler 2003; Tyler and Blader 2000).

A law-abiding society cannot be created overnight through changes in the allocation of resources within government agencies, changes that would alter the expected gains and/or risks associated with cooperation. It depends upon the socialization of appropriate social and moral values among children and the enhancement of those values among adults. Evidence suggests that a core element to the creation and enhancement of such social values is the judgment that legal authorities exercise their authority following fair procedures. This is true both during personal experiences with the police and the courts, where people are found to be more willing to accept decisions that are fairly made, and in general evaluations of the police and courts, where people are found to comply with the law and support the police and courts as institutions when they think that these same institutions generally exercise authority fairly.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does procedural justice theory depart from deterrence theory in terms of explaining compliance with legal authorities and the law?
2. Consider that someone is arrested after police are called to their home for a report of domestic violence. Explain how different interactions with police might lead to different subsequent offending behavior (i.e., continued domestic violence versus desistance from domestic violence).
3. What are the major elements underlying judgements of procedural justice according to Tyler?
4. Drawing upon procedural justice theory, how should police be trained for optimal social order?

PART XI

ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMINOLOGY: SITUATIONAL OPPORTUNITY THEORIES

Francis T. Cullen
University of Cincinnati

Robert Agnew
Emory University

Pamela Wilcox
Pennsylvania State University

Traditionally, theories of crime have focused on offenders and, in particular, on why some people are motivated to break the law. In contrast, environmental criminology is concerned not with criminals but with crime (Bottoms, 1994; Pease, 1994). Of course, for a crime to occur, there must be a criminal—that is, someone ready to offend. But there must also be another ingredient present for a criminal act to be completed: The person must also have the *opportunity to commit the crime* (see also Cloward, 1959; Cullen, 1984).

This simple observation—that is, that crime occurs only when an offender and the opportunity to offend are both present—has profound implications. Most traditional theories operate on the assumption that explaining opportunity is of secondary importance—that offenders are sufficiently motivated to find ways to break the law. Environmental criminology, however, shows that as an integral ingredient in crime, the presence or absence of opportunity shapes when and where crime events take place. The distribution of crime is thus influenced by the distribution of criminal opportunities (Cloward, 1959; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960).

Furthermore, this perspective opens up fresh ideas about *crime prevention*. Because crime is attributable to two elements—offenders and opportunities—it becomes possible to stop a crime from happening by removing either one of these two essential ingredients. Environmental criminologists suggest that manipulating opportunities is far easier than trying to make people less criminally motivated and thus is a more promising strategy for crime prevention (Clarke, 1980, 1997; Smith and Clarke, 2012). Thus, in their view, installing sturdy locks and an alarm system on one's house is a surer way to stop a burglary than trying to figure out how to turn a burglar into an upstanding citizen.

The term "environmental criminology" is really a catch-all term that encompasses a variety of different scholarly contributions. These works, however, share a common focus on two issues: (1) explaining crime events and (2) exploring the causal role of opportunity. The term "environmental" is often used as the organizing umbrella, because scholars investigate how features of the physical and social environment influence the availability of criminal opportunities and, in turn, the occurrence of crime. This approach to understanding crime is also referred to as "opportunity theory" (Wilcox et al., 2003, 2013 [Chapter 39]).

Routine Activity Theory

As discussed in Part X, rational choice theory argues that individuals choose to engage in crime. But as Felson (1986: 119) has stated, "People make choices, but they cannot choose the choices available to them." Some people are more likely than others to confront situations where the benefits of crime are high and the costs are low. The routine activity approach deals with the factors that influence the range of choices available to individuals.

According to this theoretical perspective, three elements are necessary for a crime to occur: *Motivated offenders* must come in contact with *suitable targets* in the absence of *capable guardians*. The last two elements—suitable targets and guardianship—are best seen as the core dimensions of criminal opportunity. They must co-occur for the opportunity for crime to be present (Cohen and Felson, 1979 [Chapter 36 in this part]; Clarke and Felson, 1993).

The routine activity approach takes the supply of motivated offenders as given. Instead, the perspective explains variations in crime by variations in the supply of suitable targets (e.g., expensive, lightweight merchandise) and capable guardians (e.g., neighbors, property owners, police). Suitable targets have to do with the benefits of crime, while capable guardians have to do with the costs. According to the theory, the supply of suitable targets and the presence of capable guardians are a function of our everyday lives, or "routine activities" (our family, work, leisure, consumption, and other activities). As a result, crime might rise in society not because of the emergence of pathological social conditions but simply because of changes in the normal ways people live.

For example, when trying to explain the dramatic increase in crime that occurred in the United States between 1960 and the mid-1970s, Cohen and Felson (1979) point to a major change in routine activities: People were more likely to spend time away from home (e.g., more women were attending college and working, there were more entertainment options outside the home). This meant that individuals were more often in public locations—sometimes alone on the streets at night—where they may fall prey to motivated offenders. At the same time, homes were increasingly left unprotected during the day and frequently at night, which created opportunities for burglary.

Cohen and Felson discussed additional changes in routine activities during this time period, and such changes are used to explain increases in the crime rate through their effect on suitable targets and capable guardians (see also Clarke and Felson, 1993; Felson, 1995). Still, one challenge for the theory is to better specify which of our many routine activities are most relevant to the explanation of crime. In this regard, Osgood et al. (1996) demonstrate that young adults who engage in a lot of unstructured socializing with peers in the absence of authority figures are more likely to engage in crime. Part of the reason for this is that they are more likely to encounter attractive opportunities for crime: Their peers provide materials (e.g., drugs, alcohol) and rewards for crime, and there are no authority figures to sanction crime.

Notably, at the same time that Cohen and Felson (1979) were formulating their theory, another group of scholars developed a very similar perspective called "lifestyle-exposure theory" (Hindelang et al., 1978). Based on victimization surveys, they noticed that certain people—such as young males—were more likely to be criminally victimized. They theorized that some groups in society tended to pursue lifestyles—or what Cohen and Felson would call "routine activities"—that increased their exposure to the risk of victimization. Thus, as with Cohen and Felson's approach, lifestyle theory suggested that crime acts were a function not simply of offenders but also of the routines that people followed on a daily basis.

Thus, routine activity theory developed initially as a macro-level perspective aimed at explaining temporal trends in national rates of crime, while lifestyle-exposure theory was put forth as an explanation of differential risk of individual victimization. Recognizing that both theories rested on the idea that lifestyles and routine activity create

opportunities for crime and victimization, Cohen et al. (1981) presented a "lifestyle-routine activities theory" of individual risk of victimization that merged ideas from both theories. Lifestyle-routine activity theory (often referred to as "L-RAT") proposes that individual victimization risk is a function of variation in the extent to which individuals (1) are exposed to motivated offenders, (2) live in proximity to motivated offenders, (3) are suitable targets, and (4) lack adequate guardianship. L-RAT is a widely used model for understanding variation in victimization in the general adult population as well as among adolescents, college students, and even prison inmates (see Wilcox and Cullen, 2018, for a review).

Early research on routine activity theory and L-RAT used the perspectives to explain "direct-contact predatory offenses, when at least one person directly took or damaged the person or property of another" (Felson, 2001: 43), but it has since been extended to apply to a broad range of crimes, including cybercrimes such as internet fraud, cyberbullying, and cyberstalking victimization (Felson, 1995, 2001; Forde and Kennedy, 1999; Pratt et al., 2010; Reyns, 2013; Reyns et al., 2011; Deryol and Wilcox, 2020). Overall, the data are generally supportive of routine activity theory and L-RAT, as evidenced in the selection by Cohen and Felson in Chapter 36 (see also Felson, 2002). There are some problems with measuring key concepts, and not all tests are equally supportive (for overviews, see Akers and Sellers, 2008; Madero-Hernandez and Fisher, 2013; Meier and Miethe, 1993; Wilcox and Cullen, 2018). Nonetheless, routine activity theory and L-RAT remain widely known and influential perspectives in contemporary criminology.

Crime Pattern and Target Search Theories

Just because environmental criminologists are not concerned with explaining criminal dispositions or motivations does not mean that they are uninterested in offenders. But whereas traditional theorists explore how people acquire the general predisposition to break the law, environmental criminologists focus on how people actually commit crimes. Their theoretical concern is thus not with how individuals develop into criminals but with the situations that allow those predisposed to crime to realize their criminal potential. That is, how do potential offenders find opportunities to offend? How do they find attractive targets that lack capable guardianship?

Two major overlapping approaches to answering these questions are "crime pattern theory" and "target search theory"—both developed and refined by Paul and Patricia Brantingham over the course of the last forty years (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1981, 1993, 2013; see Chapter 37 in this part). These interrelated theories extend routine activity theory and start with the insight that offenders, who spend most of their time *not* committing crimes, have routine activities just like everyone else. In the course of everyday life, offenders travel within an "activity space," consisting primarily of (1) "nodes"—such as home, school, work, shopping outlets, places of leisure, and entertainment venues (e.g., bars); and (2) "paths," or the roads, walking paths, or transit systems that connect activity nodes. Based on the time spent at nodes and on paths within activity space, offenders develop "cognitive maps" or images of their environment (Taylor and Gottfredson, 1986). These maps give offenders an awareness of their environment and of where potential targets for crime might be found, thus serving to structure criminal opportunity and crime events in nonrandom, patterned ways (for a review, see Gialopsos and Carter, 2015).

Think for a moment about selecting a restaurant for a meal in the next hour. What options first come to mind? Most often, the roster of eateries will be clustered in geographic areas that are familiar to you—that are well within the cognitive map of your local environment and along the transportation routes between the nodes where you spend the most time. On a special occasion, you might choose a restaurant that involves a fair amount of travel into an area that might require directions to find. However, most often, people eat in places that are familiar and easily accessed.

Offenders tend to search for crime targets in a similar way. “Research generally finds that crime is highly patterned by daily behavior,” observe Brantingham and Brantingham (1993: 10). “Crimes tend to occur in known places or near limited travel knowledge space.” Although more lucrative targets might exist elsewhere—in more affluent neighborhoods, for example—offenders thus tend to limit their “search area” for victimization targets to near their nodes and travel routines. Brantingham and Brantingham (1993: 11) call this the offenders’ “awareness space” (see also Brantingham and Brantingham, Chapter 37).

Routines thus structure crime in two ways. First, as offenders travel, opportunities for crime will simply present themselves—for example, a purse left unguarded or a car left unlocked. Second, as just intimated, when actively searching for a crime target, offenders wish to reduce effort and risk of detection. Within their “awareness space,” they do not have to travel long distances to know where a potential target might exist. Further, the transaction of the crime itself becomes more predictable. They are better able to know where police patrol, when homes are left unguarded, and how to escape the crime scene quickly with few impediments. A good deal of research over the past several decades supports the notion that offenders choose areas within their awareness spaces for carrying out their crimes (e.g., Bernasco and Block, 2009; Menting et al., 2016). Busy activity nodes (e.g., shops, bars, stadiums) within offender awareness spaces are particularly likely to be chosen, as such locations offer not only familiarity but also a plentiful supply of targets (Bernasco and Block, 2011).

In sum, the Brantinghams’ perspective, as reflected in their crime pattern and offender search theories, is that offenders are not just motivated but search for targets in patterned ways. Therefore, the intersection of victims and offenders that is necessary for crime relies not only on the routines of victims but also on the routines of offenders—the latter of which Cohen and Felson did not spend time on when positing routine activity theory.

This focus on the causal significance of victim *and* offender routines in crime pattern and target search theories is important for another theoretical reason: It deemphasizes the pathological nature of crime and instead shows how crime is embedded in the normal aspects of everyday life. This is not to say that people do not differ in their traits or experiences that create criminal motivations. Even so, when and where crime occurs is often regulated by more mundane features of people’s lives—including the routine activities of potential offenders and their potential victims.

Environmental Design Theory

While routine activity theory, crime pattern theory, and target search theory explain how opportunity emerges from the routine activities of offenders and victims, environmental design theory focuses on how opportunity is created by the design and layout of physical space. The origins of “crime prevention through environmental design,” or CPTED, can be traced to influential works by Jane Jacobs (1961), Elizabeth Wood (1961), C. Ray Jeffery (1971), and Oscar Newman (1972). Oscar Newman’s *Defensible Space: Crime Prevention Through Urban Design* was particularly useful in articulating a theory of the relationship between environmental design and crime.

In *Defensible Space*, Newman focused on the variable opportunities for crime across different urban residential housing communities. He compared adjacent or nearby public housing developments with similar social characteristics, such as Brownsville and Van Dyke in New York City. Brownsville and Van Dyke were located in the same neighborhood (as were other pairs of developments he observed), and their respective residential compositions were similar. In other words, both communities had populations with similar racial/ethnic compositions and similar levels of poverty, family instability, and percentage of children in the population. Despite these similarities, Van Dyke had much higher rates of crime and strikingly more maintenance problems (e.g., elevator breakdowns

reported, work tickets issued). Since general location and social characteristics were essentially constant across the communities, Newman suggested that the difference he observed across the communities—physical design—was the reason behind their variable rates of crime and maintenance problems.

In particular, Newman observed that higher-crime Van Dyke consisted of numerous three-story apartment buildings intermixed with 14-story high-rises, with nearly 90% of Van Dyke residents living in the high-rise buildings. In contrast, Brownsville consisted of three- and six-story apartment buildings, but no high-rises. Newman suggested that the reason that Brownsville was the safer, more orderly community was the predominance of low-rise-style buildings (i.e., townhouses) and mid-rise apartment buildings and the absence of high-rise slabs. According to Newman, the physical layout of the low-rise and mid-rise buildings allowed the spaces to be more easily defended or controlled by residents in comparison to the spaces in high-rise apartment buildings. In short, the low-rise- and mid-rise-style housing fostered defensible space. Newman elaborated that defensible space was related to four principles:

1. *Territoriality*: "The capacity of the physical environment to create perceived zones of territorial influences" (Newman, 1972: 51). In other words, territoriality is the extent to which a space conveys a sense of being "owned" or "private" and as having clearly designated purposes (i.e., people have a clear sense of how and when to use the space).
2. *Natural Surveillance*: "The capacity of physical design to provide surveillance opportunities for residents and their agents" (Newman, 1972: 78).
3. *Image*: "The capacity of design to influence the perception of an area as unique, well-maintained, and non-isolated" (Newman, 1972: 102).
4. *Milieu*: The location of the space within the broader urban locale, with the idea that spaces adjacent to risky places can experience spillover, whereas adjacency to safe places enhances defensibility (Newman, 1972).

Newman suggested that the design of Brownsville, in comparison to Van Dyke, allowed for stronger territoriality, greater natural surveillance, and a more positive image, in particular. He suggested that its physical design allowed social control to be exerted within.

Since his landmark work, critics have suggested that Newman's ideas about the influence of certain physical design elements, like building height, were too deterministic (e.g., Brantingham and Brantingham, 1993). Other scholars have provided evidence that "defensible" physical design does not necessarily affect the willingness of residents of an area to engage in social control (e.g., Donnelly and Kimble, 1997; Merry, 1981). Nonetheless, many aspects of Newman's work have had a lasting impact (Reynald, 2015). In particular, his work fostered the idea that physical design might affect the opportunity for crime, regardless of whether resident-based territorial attitudes or behavior are affected. For instance, certain design features can limit opportunities for offenders by denying offenders access to a space or by enhancing their risks of being detected and caught. Design features might also remove ambiguity about the appropriate use of space, thereby removing an excuse an offender might invoke for his or her illegal activities. In fact, a number of studies since Newman's famous work have shown support for the link between physical design and crime. For instance, research indicates that number of access routes, traffic volume, and presence of escape routes (i.e., proximity to highway) are positively related to an area's rate of crime, whereas use of traffic flow barriers (i.e., alley gating) can reduce crime (Bernasco and Luykx, 2003; Johnson and Bowers, 2010; Sidebottom et al., 2018; Taylor and Harrell, 1996). However, the bulk of the evidence suggests that the reason for this relationship is because design can directly affect opportunities for crime (e.g., easy access to a plethora of targets). Less evidence to date supports Newman's posited mechanism—that design fosters informal social control among residents.

Place Management Theory

Place management theory has emerged over the course of the past several decades, largely led by the work of John Eck and Tamara Madensen (now Tamara Herold) (see Chapter 38 in this part). Similar to the other theories discussed in this section, place management theory overlaps with routine activity theory. In particular, place management theory embraces the foundational premise of routine activity theory—that crime events occur when motivated offenders converge with attractive targets that lack adequate guardianship. However, place management theory goes beyond the original articulation of routine activity theory (Cohen and Felson, 1979) in recognizing that other types of controllers beyond guardians of targets might disrupt crime events.

More specifically, place management theory is built upon the idea that "crime is highly likely when an offender and a target come together at the same *place* at the same time, and there is no one nearby to control the offender, protect the target, or regulate conduct at the *place*" (Eck, 2003: 88, emphasis added). Important agents of control, according to place management theory, include (1) "handlers," people who keep a motivated offender out of trouble, such as parents, teachers, coaches, or neighbors; (2) "guardians," people who protect potential victims/targets from theft, attack, or damage; and (3) "place managers," owners of proprietary places, or representatives of owners of proprietary places who are responsible for monitoring and controlling behavior at the location (see also Eck, 1994; Felson, 1995). As the name of the theory implies, place management theory gives detailed attention to the particular role of place managers in controlling crime. The central thesis of place management theory is that effective managers reduce crime opportunities. As such, crime is more likely to occur at places that lack effective managers (Madensen and Eck, 2013: 555; Chapter 38 in this part).

More specifically, place management theory is built upon the idea that "crime is highly likely when an offender and a target come together at the same *place* at the same time, and there is no one nearby to control the offender, protect the target, or regulate conduct at the *place*" (Eck, 2003: 88, emphasis added). Important agents of control, according to place management theory, include (1) "handlers," people who keep a motivated offender out of trouble, such as parents, teachers, coaches, or neighbors; (2) "guardians," people who protect potential victims/targets from theft, attack, or damage; and (3) "place managers," owners of proprietary places, or representatives of owners of proprietary places who are responsible for monitoring and controlling behavior at the location (see also Eck, 1994; Felson, 1995). As the name of the theory implies, place management theory gives detailed attention to the particular role of place managers in controlling crime. The central thesis of place management theory is that effective managers reduce crime opportunities. As such, crime is more likely to occur at places that lack effective managers (Madensen and Eck, 2013: 555; Chapter 38 in this part).

More specifically, place management theory is built upon the idea that "crime is highly likely when an offender and a target come together at the same *place* at the same time, and there is no one nearby to control the offender, protect the target, or regulate conduct at the *place*" (Eck, 2003: 88, emphasis added). Important agents of control, according to place management theory, include (1) "handlers," people who keep a motivated offender out of trouble, such as parents, teachers, coaches, or neighbors; (2) "guardians," people who protect potential victims/targets from theft, attack, or damage; and (3) "place managers," owners of proprietary places, or representatives of owners of proprietary places who are responsible for monitoring and controlling behavior at the location (see also Eck, 1994; Felson, 1995). As the name of the theory implies, place management theory gives detailed attention to the particular role of place managers in controlling crime. The central thesis of place management theory is that effective managers reduce crime opportunities. As such, crime is more likely to occur at places that lack effective managers (Madensen and Eck, 2013: 555; Chapter 38 in this part).

Place management theory further explains effective management using a framework referred to with the acronym ORCA. ORCA summarizes four processes that managers engage in when creating and maintaining a business, with crime prevention often a secondary consideration. Nonetheless, each of these processes can affect crime opportunity (Madensen and Eck, 2013):

1. *O*rganization of space: Managers must select a location for their proprietary place. They also make decisions about the design or layout of the space and any themes or motifs they want to use, and they are responsible for decisions regarding maintenance and upkeep.
2. *R*egulation of conduct: Managers must decide what sorts of activities/behavior will be promoted, allowed, or prohibited.
3. *C*ontrol of access: Managers must make decisions about the individuals/groups that will be allowed entry and those that will be denied. They also decide how to provide access (i.e., open access, or more controlled access through use of locks, swipe cards, ID checks).
4. *A*cquisition of resources: Managers decide how to secure money and other resources for profit versus supporting organization of space, regulation of conduct, and control of access.

Again, though crime prevention is often not the primary consideration as proprietary place managers make decisions regarding ORCA, such decisions can impact crime at the location. As an example, imagine an apartment building in which the owner allows the place to become dilapidated and have a "broken window" appearance, thus inviting mischief (see Part X; Chapter 34). The property lacks a consistent on-site management presence, so conduct at the location is not well regulated. As a result, the location becomes vulnerable to loitering, drug sales, and intimidation of passersby. The exterior is completely accessible to the general public, and the building's door locks are in disrepair, allowing easy access. The property owner is strictly focused on profit and does not invest resources to improve the property. In this scenario, management decisions (within the ORCA framework) would likely increase criminal opportunity, leaving the property vulnerable to becoming a crime hotspot (Wilcox and Cullen, 2018).

To date, place management theory has focused most fully on ORCA decisions at proprietary places and how those decisions impact levels of crime on site. However, the theory also recognizes that proprietary crime site locations are often part of a larger network of places that play important roles in crime. For example, Madensen and Eck (2013; see Chapter 38) identify "convergent settings" as places where potential offenders routinely meet before committing crime at another location. Further, they define "comfort spaces" as places that offenders use to help them carry out crime at another location—places like safe houses or stash locations (Hammer, 2020). Finally, Madensen and Eck (2013) identify "corrupt spots" as places that actually promote crime at other location (i.e., a metal recycling company encourages theft).

To date, place management theory has focused most fully on ORCA decisions at proprietary places and how those decisions impact levels of crime on site. However, the theory also recognizes that proprietary crime site locations are often part of a larger network of places that play important roles in crime. For example, Madensen and Eck (2013; see Chapter 38) identify "convergent settings" as places where potential offenders routinely meet before committing crime at another location. Further, they define "comfort spaces" as places that offenders use to help them carry out crime at another location—places like safe houses or stash locations (Hammer, 2020). Finally, Madensen and Eck (2013) identify "corrupt spots" as places that actually promote crime at other location (i.e., a metal recycling company encourages theft).

Place management theory is a relatively new theory, but research supportive of its ideas does exist. For example, the theory emerged from Eck's (1994) study of drug markets in San Diego, where he found that apartment buildings that lacked owners who were proactive in preventing dealing on their property were particularly vulnerable locations.

Studies by Graham and colleagues indicate that the frequency of aggression at bars is associated with numerous management decisions related to regulation of conduct and access control, including the extent to which patrons are allowed to hang out after closing and the extent to which bars serve patrons to the point of intoxication. However, their research also indicates that training bar managers to better regulate conduct is associated with significant reductions in aggressive behavior among patrons (Graham and Homel, 2012; Graham et al., 2004).

Other work has indicated that the effects of place management may be conditional on other factors. For example, Townsley et al. (2014) studied the relationship between place management and crime at apartments in Australia. They found that effect of intensity of place management was dependent on the typical tenure of residents of the buildings. Intensity of placement management was related to lower crime in buildings that housed a mixture of short- and long-term residents. Level of place management was unrelated to crime among buildings that primarily housed long-term residents, and it was actually associated with more crime among buildings that primarily housed short-term residents. A recent study of apartment place managers in Cincinnati indicated that managers' decisions to hire security, conduct criminal background checks of potential tenants, and to contact potential tenants' previous landlords were associated with lower rates of crime at apartments located in advantaged neighborhoods; such management practices had little effect among apartments located in more disadvantaged contexts (Gilchrist et al., 2019).

Eck and Madensen-Herold (2018) offer additional insight into the intersection of proprietary place management and neighborhood disadvantage in what might be considered "a political economy of place management" (see also Wilcox and Cullen, 2018: 135). They argue that there are more hot spots of crime in disadvantaged areas because places in poor communities are disproportionately poorly managed. But why? Eck and Madensen-Herold (2018) suggest that deflated property values provide little incentive to owners to allocate resources in order to organize space, regulate conduct, control access. Additionally, they suggest that racial segregation and racial discrimination play roles as well. They offer that property owners in disadvantaged areas take advantage of the fact that racial minorities often have limited housing options and willfully ignore management responsibilities; such negligence allows crime to occur at locations and spread to others nearby.

Multilevel Criminal Opportunity Theory

Collectively speaking, the environmental criminology perspectives discussed up to this point—routine activity theory, crime pattern and target search theories, environmental design theory, and place management theory—suggest that crime opportunity is structured at multiple levels of analysis, thus accounting for observable clustering or concentration of crime events at these various levels of analysis. For example, the clustering of crime at the individual level exists in that a small group of people appear to be repeatedly targeted for crime victimization. These chronic repeat victims actually account for a large percentage of overall crime victimizations, and persistent differences in lifestyles and routine activities are thought to account for some of this clustering (e.g., Grove and Farrell, 2012; Lauritsen and Davis Quinet, 1995; Turanovic and Pratt, 2014; Turanovic et al., 2018).

Clusters of crime also exist at "places" and along particular streets (for a review, see Braga, 2012; see also Weisburd, 2015; Wilcox and Eck, 2011). For example, a famous study conducted in Minneapolis in the 1980s by Lawrence Sherman and colleagues (1989) revealed that over 50% of the calls to police for service in one year were associated with just 3% of the overall addresses or intersections in the city. Subsequent work has shown similar patterns of nonrandom crime clustering at small-scale units, including addresses and intersections as well as street blocks (Bernasco and Block, 2011; Braga et al., 2011; Brantingham and Brantingham, 1999; Groff et al., 2010; Weisburd et

al., 2004, 2012). Crime concentration at such places is also attributed to crime opportunity, with some places thought to provide large supplies of suitable targets, poor environmental design, and/or weak place management (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1999; Madensen and Eck, 2013; Newman, 1972).

The larger communities in which streets and places are situated can also structure opportunity. The ways in which an entire community organizes residences, work, school, leisure, and other activities affect the convergence of motivated offenders and suitable targets and the levels of guardianship community-wide (e.g., Felson and Eckert, 2016). For example, a community's residential density influences residential activity and, in turn, opportunities for crime throughout the community (Sampson, 1983, 1985; Smith et al., 2000). Communities can also structure criminal opportunity through their various land uses. Communities with much nonresidential land use (i.e., commercial property) are thought to be particularly opportunistic because they support high levels of public activity (e.g., Kurtz et al., 1998; Roncek and Maier, 1991; Smith et al., 2000; Stucky and Ottensmann, 2009). Such public activity provides an ample supply of suitable targets while also making effective guardianship more difficult.

As described in Chapter 39, *multilevel criminal opportunity theory* (MCOT), also referred to as "multicontextual criminal opportunity theory," explicitly states that criminal opportunity is provided at various embedded levels of analysis, such as those just mentioned above—at individual targets, at places, along streets, and in communities (see also Tillyer, 2010, 2015; Wilcox et al., 2003; Wilcox and Tillyer, 2018). Therefore, MCOT rejects the tendency to consider crime opportunity at particular units of analysis in isolation. Instead, MCOT encourages the consideration of the interconnectedness of opportunity characterizing multiple levels of analysis. For example, MCOT suggests that opportunity characterizing one unit of analysis (say, individuals or places) might be reinforced or, conversely, canceled out by the opportunity (or lack thereof) presented by other units (say, streets or neighborhoods). Also, criminal opportunity at multiple levels might not work in an independent manner. Rather, opportunity might be something that emerges from the *interaction* between individual and contextual levels. In other words, factors presumably indicative of individual-level or place-level opportunity might not lead to crime events in the same way across different broader environmental contexts, depending upon the opportunity available in the context(s) in which individuals and/or places are situated.

To illustrate the notion of multilevel opportunity, let's consider a simple hypothetical example. Consider an offender named John who intends to commit a robbery. John lives close to a convenience store with an ATM machine outside. Very close to the ATM is a good place to hide from potential victims and bystanders while observing people stopping to get money. In short, the convenience store offers a good deal of *place-based opportunity* for robbery—the presence of the ATM offers suitable targets for robbery and the hiding spot minimizes effective guardianship. Additionally, the convenience store is located in a community with a good deal of commercial property as opposed to residential property, such that there are few residents living in the area, overseeing street activity, and serving as potential guardians. This means that the opportunity to rob is embedded in a particular community context—one that offers a good deal of *neighborhood-level opportunity* for robbery. The opportunity provided by the convenience store and the opportunity provided by the broader neighborhood context in which the store is located combine to make this a particularly opportunistic situation for John to commit robbery.

There is research that supports the ideas expressed in MCOT. For example, research on offender decision making indicates that offenders select opportunistic targets and locations in a multistaged fashion (see Chapter 33, Part X). First, offenders choose an area of town where they feel comfortable operating. For example, like John in the hypothetical example above, they tend to choose areas with a lot of pedestrians (potential targets) but few residents—or few residents engaged in informal social control of street activity (guardians). Thus, in this first stage of target selection, neighborhood-level opportunity is considered by offenders. Next, offenders select particular locations or targets within opportunistic neighborhoods. Here, characteristics of individual targets or specific locations are

considered—characteristics that make them more or less suitable targets or opportunistic locations for crime (e.g., is there an ATM machine at the location; can the offender surprise the victim at the location?). At this stage, individual- or place-level opportunity is being considered.

Beyond research on target selection and choice location among offenders, a number of multilevel studies of victimization have been conducted that support the idea that individual-level and neighborhood-level opportunity impact victimization risk (for a review, see Wilcox et al., 2013). An early classic test of the notion of multilevel opportunity with respect to victimization risk was provided by Sampson and Wooldredge (1987). They analyzed data from the British Crime Survey in order to determine how risk of personal and property victimization was affected by both individual/household-level and neighborhood-level indicators of opportunity. They found that single-person households and households that were frequently left unoccupied were at greater risk for burglary victimization, thus supporting the idea that individual-level lifestyles and routine activities provide opportunities for criminal victimization. However, they also observed that community-level characteristics affected victimization risk. In particular, households in communities marked by high rates of family disruption (i.e., single-parent households), high rates of single-person households, low social cohesion, high rates of ownership of expensive goods, high rates of unemployment, and high proportions of apartments were at greater risk for burglary. Such findings support the idea that community context can affect the number and nature of perceived opportunities for burglary.

Other support for the theoretical ideas expressed in MCOT comes from analyses of data from the Seattle Victimization Survey. Studies using the Seattle data have estimated *cross-level interactions* showing that the effects of household characteristics are related to burglary victimization differently, depending upon neighborhood characteristics. For example, studies indicate that household safety precautions (e.g., locking doors, using alarms) reduced burglary risk more among households in orderly, affluent neighborhoods compared to disorderly ones (Miethe and Meier, 1994; Wilcox Rountree et al., 1994). The crime-deterrent effects of household precautions also appeared to be more pronounced among households in neighborhoods that exhibited high levels of informal social control and physical design features consistent with strong defensible space (Wilcox et al., 2007). Such findings support the idea that neighborhoods that appear to provide few overall opportunities for crime serve to reinforce or enhance place-level actions taken to reduce opportunity, thus reducing risk all the more.

Research by Deryol and colleagues (2016) provides further support for the place–neighborhood interactions implied in MCOT, but in relation to crime events at all types of city locations. Their multilevel analysis of locations nested within Cincinnati block groups revealed that the proximity of locations to drinking/liquor establishments (crime-generating nodes) or bus stops (paths) was more strongly related to the number of crime incidents experienced at the location, but the effect was especially pronounced in neighborhoods with high numbers of suitable targets, as measured by overall commercial density. Similar analyses of crime in San Antonio indicated that streets with busy activity nodes were associated with higher crime overall, but especially on streets located in high-opportunity neighborhood contexts—specifically, neighborhoods characterized by economic disadvantage, high levels of traffic, commercial density, and low levels of civic engagement (Tillyer and Walter, 2019; Tillyer et al., 2021).

Finally, Marie Tillyer and colleagues have extended the application of MCOT to account for variation in the "quality" of crime and victimization events, beyond their very occurrence. First, they suggest that victimization events have situational characteristics, including bystander presence, that affect the severity of the incident. For example, bystander presence might provide less opportunity for severe victim injury even if it does not prevent the victimization incident itself (Tillyer et al., 2010). Further, Tillyer and Tillyer (2014) suggest that the effect of bystander presence diminishing the opportunity for victim injury is likely not the same across community context. Specifically, they theorize that the effect of bystander presence on victim injury might be substantially weakened in community contexts in which people, broadly speaking, are reluctant to intervene. In fact, Tillyer and Tillyer's (2014)

analysis of national incident-level data on robbery events indicates that bystander presence was less effective in reducing victim injury in community contexts characterized by concentrated disadvantage.

References

Akers, Ronald L. and Christine S. Sellers. 2008. *Criminological Theories: Introduction, Evaluation, and Application,* 5th edition. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

Bernasco, Wim and Richard Block. 2009. "Where Offenders Choose to Attack: A Discrete Choice Model of Robberies in Chicago." *Criminology* **47**: 93–130.

____. 2011. "Robberies in Chicago: A Block-Level Analysis of the Influence of Crime Generators, Crime Attractors, and Offender Anchor Points." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **48**: 33–57.

Bernasco, Wim and Floor Luykx. 2003. "Effects of Attractiveness, Opportunity and Accessibility to Burglars on Residential Burglary Rates of Urban Neighborhoods." *Criminology* **41**: 981–1002.

Bottoms, Anthony E. 1994. "Environmental Criminology." In Mike Maguire, Rod Morgan, and Robert Reiner (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*, pp. 585–656. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.

Braga, Anthony A. 2012. "High Crime Places, Times, and Offenders." In Brandon C. Welsh and David P. Farrington (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Crime Prevention*, pp. 316–336. New York: Oxford University Press.

Braga, Anthony A., David M. Hureau, and Andrew V. Papachristos. 2011. "The Relevance of Micro Places to Citywide Robbery Trends: A Longitudinal Analysis of Robbery Incidents at Street Corners and Block Faces in Boston." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **48**: 7–32.

Brantingham, Patricia L. and Paul J. Brantingham. 1999. "A Theoretical Model of Crime Hot Spot Generation." *Studies on Crime and Crime Prevention* **8**: 7–26.

Brantingham, Paul J. and Patricia L. Brantingham, eds. 1981. *Environmental Criminology*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

____. 1993. "Nodes, Paths, Edges: Considerations on the Complexity of Crime and the Physical Environment." *Environmental Psychology* **13**: 3–28.

____. 2013. "The Theory of Target Search." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory,* pp. 535–553. New York: Oxford University Press.

Clarke, Ronald V. 1980. "'Situational' Crime Prevention: Theory and Practice." *British Journal of Criminology* **20**: 136–147.

____. ed. 1997. *Situational Crime Prevention: Successful case Studies*. Albany, NY: Harrow and Heston.

Clarke, Ronald V. and Marcus Felson, eds. 1993. *Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **5**: *Routine Activity and Rational Choice*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Cloward, Richard A. 1959. "Illegitimate Means, Anomie, and Deviant Behavior." *American Sociological Review* **24**: 164–176.

Cloward, Richard A. and Lloyd E. Ohlin. 1960. *Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs*. New York: Free Press.

Cohen, Lawrence E. and Marcus Felson. 1979. "Social Change and Crime Rate Trends: A Routine Activity Approach." *American Sociological Review* **44**: 588–607.

Cohen, Lawrence E., James R. Kluegel, and Kenneth C. Land. 1981. "Social Inequality and Predatory Criminal Victimization: An Exposition and Test of a Formal Theory." *American Sociological Review* **46**: 505–524.

Cullen, Francis T. 1984. *Rethinking Crime and Deviance Theory: The Emergence of a Structuring Tradition*. Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Allanheld.

Deryol, Rustu and Pamela Wilcox. 2020. "Physical Health Risk Factors across Traditional Bullying and Cyberbullying Victim and Offender Groups." *Victims and Offenders* **15**: 520–547.

Deryol, Rustu, Pamela Wilcox, Matthew Logan, and John Wooldredge. 2016. "Crime Places in Context: An Illustration of the Multilevel Nature of Hotspot Development." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **32**: 305–325.

Donnelly, Patrick G. and Charles E. Kimble. 1997. "Community Organizing, Environmental Change, and Neighborhood Crime." *Crime and Delinquency* **43**: 493–511.

Eck, John E. 1994. *Drug Markets and Drug Places: A Case-Control Study of the Spatial Structure of Illicit Drug Dealing*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park.

____. 2003. "Police Problems: The Complexity of Problem Theory, Research, and Evaluation." In Johannes Knutsson (ed.), *Problem Oriented Policing: From Innovation to Mainstream—Crime Prevention Studies,* Volume **15**, pp. 79–113. Monsey, NY: Criminal Justice Press.

Eck, John E. and Tamara D. Madensen-Herold. 2018. "Place Management, Guardianship, and the Establishment of Order." In Daniel S. Nagin, Francis T. Cullen, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (eds.), *Deterrence, Choice, and Crime: Contemporary Perspectives—Advances in Criminological Theory,* Volume **23**, pp. 269–308. New York: Routledge.

Felson, Marcus. 1986. "Linking Criminal Choices, Routine Activities, Informal Control, and Criminal Outcomes." In Derek B. Cornish and Ronald V. Clarke (eds.), *The Reasoning Criminal*, pp. 119–128. New York: Springer-Verlag.

____. 1995. "Those Who Discourage Crime." In John E. Eck and David Weisburd (eds.), *Crime and Place: Crime Prevention Studies*, Volume **4**, pp. 53–66. Monsey, NY: Criminal Justice Press.

____. 2001. "The Routine Activity Approach." In Raymond Paternoster and Ronet Bachman (eds.), *Explaining Criminals and Crime*, pp. 43–46. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

____. 2002. *Crime and Everyday Life*, 3rd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Felson, Marcus and Mary Eckert. 2016. *Crime and Everyday Life,* 5th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Forde, David and Leslie Kennedy. 1999. *When Push, Comes to Shove: A Routine Conflict Approach to Violence*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Gialopsos, Brooke Miller and J. W. Carter, III. 2015. "Offender Searches and Crime Events." *Journal of Contemporary Criminology* **31**: 53–70.

Gilchrist, Andrew, Rustu Deryol, Troy Payne, and Pamela Wilcox. 2019. "Place Management and Neighborhood Context." *Security Journal* ***32***: 501–522.

Graham, Kathryn and Ross Homel. 2012. *Raising the Bar: Preventing Aggression in and around Bars, Pubs, and Clubs*. New York: Routledge.

Graham, Kathryn, D. Wayne Osgood, Elaine Zibrowski, John Purcell, Louis Gliksman, Kenneth Leonard, Kai Pernanen, Robert F. Saltz, and Traci L. Toomey. 2004. "The Effect of the Safer Bars Programme on Physical Aggression in Bars: Results of a Randomized Controlled Trial." *Drug and Alcohol Review* **23**: 31–41.

Groff, Elizabeth R., David Weisburd, and Sue-Min Yang. 2010. "Is It Important to Examine Crime Trends at a Local 'Micro' Level? A Longitudinal Analysis of Street to Street Variability in Crime Trajectories." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **26**: 7–32.

Grove, Louise and Graham Farrell. 2012. "Once Bitten, Twice Shy: Repeat Victimization and Its Prevention." In David P. Farrington and Brandon C. Welsh (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Crime Prevention,* pp. 404–419. Oxford,

UK: Oxford University Press.

Hammer, Matthew G. 2020. *Place-Based Investigations of Violent Offender Territories (PIVOT): An Exploration and Evaluation of a Place Network Disruption Violence Reduction Strategy in Cincinnati, Ohio*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Cincinnati.

Hindelang, Michael J., Michael R. Gottfredson, and James Garofalo. 1978. *Victims of Personal Crime: An Empirical Foundation for a Theory of Personal Victimization*. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.

Jacobs, Jane. 1961. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Vintage.

Jeffery, C. Ray. 1971. *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Johnson, Shane D. and Kate J. Bowers. 2010. "Permeability and Burglary Risk: Are Cul-de-sacs Safer?" *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **26**: 89–111.

Kurtz, Ellen, Barbara Koons, and Ralph B. Taylor. 1998. "Land Use, Physical Deterioration, Resident-Based Control, and Calls for Service on Urban Streetblocks." *Justice Quarterly* **15**: 121–149.

Lauritsen, Janet L. and Kenna F. Davis Quinet. 1995. "Repeat Victimization Among Adolescents and Young Adults." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **11**: 143–166.

Madensen, Tamara D. and John E. Eck. 2013. "Crime Places and Place Management." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 554–578. New York: Oxford University Press.

Madero-Hernandez, Arelys and Bonnie S. Fisher. 2013. "Routine Activity Theory." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory,* pp. 513–534. New York: Oxford University Press.

Meier, Robert F. and Terance D. Miethe. 1993. "Understanding Theories of Criminal Victimization." In Michael Tonry (ed.), *Crime and Justice*, Volume **17**, pp. 459–499. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Menting, Barbara, Marre Lammers, Stijn Ruiter, and Wim Bernasco. 2016. "Family Matters: Effects of Family Members' Residential Areas on Crime Location Choice." *Criminology* **54**: 413–433.

Merry, Sally E. 1981. "Defensible Space Undefended: Social Factors in Crime Control Through Environmental Design." *Urban Affairs Quarterly* **16**: 397–422.

Miethe, Terance D. and Robert F. Meier. 1994. *Crime and Its Social Context: Toward an Integrated Theory of Offenders, Victims, and Situations*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Newman, Oscar. 1972. *Defensible Space: Crime Prevention Through Urban Design*. New York: Macmillan.

Osgood, D. Wayne, Janet K. Wilson, Patrick O'Malley, Jerald G. Bachman, and Lloyd D. Johnson. 1996. "Routine Activities and Individual Deviant Behavior." *American Sociological Review* **61**: 635–655.

Pease, Ken. 1994. "Crime Prevention." In Mike Maguire, Rod Morgan, and Robert Reiner (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*, pp. 659–703. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.

Pratt, Travis C., Kristy Holtfreter, and Michael D. Reisig. 2010. "Routine Online Activity and Internet Fraud Targeting: Extending the Generality of Routine Activity Theory." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **47**: 267–296.

Reynald, Danielle M. 2015. "Environmental Design and Crime Events." *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* **31**: 71–89.

Reyns, Bradford W. 2013. "Online Routines and Identity Theft Victimization: Further Expanding Routine Activity Theory beyond Direct-Contact Offenses." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **50**: 216–238.

Reyns, Bradford W., Billy Henson, and Bonnie S. Fisher. 2011. “Being Pursued Online: Applying Cyberlifestyle–Routine Activities Theory to Cyberstalking Victimization.” *Criminal Justice and Behavior* **38**: 1149–1169.

Roncek, Dennis W. and Pamela A. Maier. 1991. “Bars, Blocks, and Crimes Revisited: Linking the Theory of Routine Activities to the Empiricism of ‘Hot Spots.’” *Criminology* **29**: 725–753.

Sampson, Robert J. 1983. “Structural Density and Criminal Victimization.” *Criminology* **21**: 276–293.

____. 1985. “Neighborhood and Crime: The Structural Determinants of Personal Victimization.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **22**: 7–40.

Sampson, Robert J. and John Wooldredge. 1987. “Linking the Micro- and Macro-Level Dimensions of Lifestyle-Routine Activity and Opportunity Models of Predatory Victimization.” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **3**: 371–393.

Sherman, Lawrence W., Patrick R. Gartin, and Michael E. Buerger. 1989. “Hot Spots of Predatory Crime: Routine Activities and the Criminology of Place.” *Criminology* **27**: 27–55.

Sidebottom, Aiden, Lisa Tompson, Amy Thornton, Karen Bullock, Nick Tilley, Kate Bowers, and Shane D. Johnson. 2018. “Gating Alleys to Reduce Crime: A Meta-analysis and Realist Synthesis.” *Justice Quarterly* **35**: 55–86.

Smith, Martha J. and Ronald V. Clarke. 2012. “Situational Crime Prevention: Classifying Techniques Using ‘Good Enough’ Theory.” In Brandon C. Welsh and David P. Farrington (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Crime Prevention*, pp. 291–315. New York: Oxford University Press.

Smith, William R., Sharon G. Frazee, and Elizabeth L. Davison. 2000. “Furthering the Integration of Routine Activity and Social Disorganization Theories: A Socio-Ecological Analysis of Street Robbery as a Diffusion Process.” *Criminology* **38**: 489–524.

Stucky, Thomas D. and John R. Ottensmann. 2009. “Land Use and Violent Crime.” *Criminology* **47**: 1223–1264.

Taylor, Ralph B. and Stephen Gottfredson. 1986. “Environmental Design, Crime, and Prevention: An Examination of Community Dynamics.” In Albert J. Reis, Jr., and Michael Tonry (eds.), *Communities and Crime—Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, Volume **8**, pp. 387–416. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Taylor, Ralph B. and Adele V. Harrell. 1996. *Physical Environment and Crime*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice. NCJ 157311.

Tillyer, Marie Skubak. 2010. “Wilcox, Pamela, Kenneth C. Land, and Scott A. Hunt: Multicontextual Opportunity Theory.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*, pp. 1008–1011. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

____. 2015. “General Multilevel Opportunity and Crime Events.” *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* **31**: 107–121.

Tillyer, Marie Skubak, J. Mitchell Miller, and Rob Tillyer. 2010. “The Environmental and Situational Correlates of Victim Injury in Non-fatal Violent Incidents.” *Criminal Justice and Behavior* **38**: 433–452.

Tillyer, Marie Skubak and Rob Tillyer. 2014. “Violence in Context: A Multilevel Analysis of Victim Injury in Robbery Incidents.” *Justice Quarterly* **31**: 767–791.

Tillyer, Marie Skubak and Rebecca J. Walter. 2019. “Low-income Housing and Crime: The Influence of Housing Development and Neighborhood Characteristics.” *Crime and Delinquency* **65**: 969–993.

Tillyer, Marie Skubak, Pamela Wilcox, and Rebecca J. Walter. 2021. “Crime Generators in Context: Examining ‘Place in Neighborhood’ Propositions.” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 37: 517–546.

Townsley, Michael, Sacha Reid, Danielle Reynald, John Rynne, and Benjamin Hutchins. 2014. “Risky Facilities: Analysis of Crime Concentration in High-Rise Buildings.” *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice* **476**: 1–7.

Turanovic, Jillian J. and Travis C. Pratt. 2014. “‘Can’t Stop, Won’t Stop’: Self-Control, Risky Lifestyles, and Repeat Victimization.” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **30**: 29–56.

Turanovic, Jillian J., Travis C. Pratt, and Alex R. Piquero. 2018. “Structural Constraints, Risky Lifestyles, and Repeat Victimization.” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **34**: 251–274.

Weisburd, David. 2015. “The Law of Crime Concentration and the Criminology of Place.” *Criminology* **53**: 133–157.

Weisburd, David, Shawn Bushway, Cynthia Lum, and Sue-Ming Yang. 2004. “Trajectories of Crime at Places: A Longitudinal Study of Street Segments in the City of Seattle.” *Criminology* **42**: 283–321.

Weisburd, David, Elizabeth R. Groff, and Sue-Ming Yang. 2012. *The Criminology of Place: Street Segments and Our Understanding of the Crime Problem*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wilcox, Pamela and Francis T. Cullen. 2018. “Situational Opportunity Theories of Crime.” *Annual Review of Criminology* **1**: 123–148.

Wilcox, Pamela, and John E. Eck. 2011. “Criminology of the Unpopular: Implications for Policy Aimed at Payday Lending Facilities.” *Criminology and Public Policy* **10**: 473–482.

Wilcox, Pamela, Brooke Miller Gialopsos, and Kenneth C. Land. 2013. “Multilevel Criminal Opportunity.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 579–601. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wilcox, Pamela, Kenneth C. Land, and Scott A. Hunt. 2003. *Criminal Circumstance: A Dynamic Multicontextual Criminal Opportunity Theory*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Wilcox, Pamela, Tamara D. Madensen, and Marie Skubak Tillyer. 2007. “Guardianship in Context: Implications for Burglary Risk and Prevention.” *Criminology* **45**: 771–804.

Wilcox, Pamela and Marie Skubak Tillyer. 2018. “Place and Neighborhood Contexts.” In David Weisburd and John E. Eck (eds.), *Unraveling the Crime-Place Connection: New Directions in Theory and Policy—Advances in Criminological Theory,* Vol. **22**, pp. 121–142. New York: Routledge.

Wilcox Rountree, Pamela, Kenneth C. Land, and Terance D. Miethe. 1994. “Macro-Micro Integration in the Study of Victimization: A Hierarchical Logistic Model Analysis Across Seattle Neighborhoods.” *Criminology* **32**: 387–414.

Wood, Elizabeth, 1961. *Housing Design: A Social Theory*. Citizens’ Housing and Planning Council of New York.

36.
Routine Activity Theory*

Lawrence E. Cohen

Marcus Felson

The routine activity approach is based on two rather simple ideas. First, it argues that in order for a crime to occur, motivated offenders must converge with suitable targets in the absence of capable guardians. Second, it argues that the probability of this situation occurring is influenced by our "routine activities"—including our work, family, leisure, and consumption activities. So, for example, if we spend more time in public places—such as in bars and on the street—we increase the likelihood that we will come into contact with motivated offenders in the absence of capable guardians. As a consequence, we are more likely to be victimized.

In this selection, Cohen and Felson (1979) demonstrate that these simple ideas can be used to help explain the increase in crime experienced in the United States after World War II. They show much creativity in applying these ideas, and they make a powerful case for the routine activity approach. This approach has also been used to explain geographic differences in crime rates, differences in the amount of crime experienced by sociodemographic groups (e.g., why young African American males have a high rate of crime victimization), and individual differences in crime. As was indicated in the introduction to this section, the data are generally supportive of the theory, although not all studies support it (see Akers and Sellers, 2008; Birkbeck and LaFree, 1993; Felson, 1998, 2001; Fisher et al., 2002; Meier and Miethe, 1993; Miethe and Meier, 1994; Tittle, 1995).

The routine activity approach is valuable because it complements traditional crime theories in a fundamental way. These theories typically focus on the factors that motivate or dispose individuals to engage in crime; that is, they try to identify what factors produce motivated offenders. In contrast, the routine activity approach usually takes the supply of motivated offenders for granted. Instead, the theory focuses on the opportunities for crime on the premise that even when a motivated offender is present, no crime can occur if no opportunity is available. Notably, Cohen and Felson's routine activity theory identifies two important dimensions of opportunity: an attractive target and the absence of capable guardianship.

The assumption that motivated offenders can be largely assumed to exist is one criticism of routine activity theory. Recognizing this limitation, Miethe and Meier (1994) developed an integrated theory that attempts to explain both offender motivation and the opportunities for crime. Other scholars have tried to extend the theory by focusing on how opportunity is linked to the social contexts in which a criminal act takes place, such as whether a neighborhood is disorganized (Wilcox et al., 2003). It is clear that routine activity theory remains an important perspective that continues to generate both theoretical elaboration and empirical studies (for reviews, see Madero-Hernandez and Fisher, 2013; McNeeley, 2015).

References

Akers, Ronald L. and Christine S. Sellers. 2008. *Criminological Theories: Introduction, Evaluation, and Application*, 5th edition. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

Birkbeck, Christopher and Gary LaFree. 1993. “The Situational Analysis of Crime and Deviance.” *Annual Review of Sociology* **19**: 113–137.

Cohen, Lawrence E. and Marcus Felson. 1979. “Social Change and Crime Rate Trends: A Routine Activity Approach.” *American Sociological Review*, **44**: 588–608.

Felson, Marcus. 1998. *Crime and Everyday Life*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

2001. “The Routine Activity Approach.” In Raymond Paternoster and Ronet Bachman (eds.), *Explaining Criminals and Crime*, pp. 43–46. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

Fisher, Bonnie S., Francis T. Cullen, and Michael G. Turner. 2002. “Being Pursued: Stalking Victimization in a National Study of College Women.” *Criminology and Public Policy* **1**: 257–308.

Madero-Hernandez, Arelys and Bonnie S. Fisher. 2013. “Routine Activity Theory.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 513–534. New York: Oxford University Press.

McNeeley, Susan. 2015. “Lifestyle-Routine Activities and Crime Events.” *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* **31**: 30–52.

Meier, Robert F. and Terance D. Miethe. 1993. “Understanding Theories of Criminal Victimization.” In Michael Tonry (ed.), *Crime, and Justice: A Review of Research*, Volume **17**, pp. 459–499. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Miethe, Terance D. and Robert F. Meier. 1994. *Crime and Its Social Context: Toward an Integrated Theory of Offenders, Victims, and Situations*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Tittle, Charles R. 1995. *Control Balance: Toward a General Theory of Deviance*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Wilcox, Pamela, Kenneth C. Land, and Scott A. Hunt. 2003. *Criminal Circumstance: A Dynamic Multicontextual Criminal Opportunity Theory*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

We argue that structural changes in routine activity patterns can influence crime rates by affecting the convergence in space and time of the three minimal elements of direct-contact predatory violations: (1) motivated offenders, (2) suitable targets, and (3) the absence of capable guardians against a violation. We further argue that the lack of any one of these elements is sufficient to prevent the successful completion of a direct-contact predatory crime, and that the convergence in time and space of suitable targets and the absence of capable guardians may even lead to large increases in crime rates without necessarily requiring any increase in the structural conditions that motivate individuals to engage in crime. That is, if the proportion of motivated offenders or even suitable targets were to remain stable in a community, changes in routine activities could nonetheless alter the likelihood of their convergence in space and time, thereby creating more opportunities for crimes to occur. Control therefore becomes critical. If controls through routine activities were to decrease, illegal predatory activities could then be likely to increase….

Unlike many criminological inquiries, we do not examine why individuals or groups are inclined criminally, but rather we take criminal inclination as given and examine the manner in which the spatiotemporal organization of social activities helps people to translate their criminal inclinations into action. Criminal violations are treated here as routine activities which share many attributes of, and are interdependent with, other routine activities….

* Reprinted from Lawrence E. Cohen and Marcus Felson, “Social Change and Crime Rate Trends: A Routine Activity Approach” in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 44, 588–608. Copyright © 1979 by the American Sociological Association. Reprinted by permission of the American Sociological Association. (pages 588–591; 593–605)

The Minimal Elements of Direct-Contact Predatory Violations

As we previously stated, despite their great diversity, direct-contact predatory violations share some important requirements which facilitate analysis of their structure. Each successfully completed violation minimally requires an *offender* with both criminal inclinations and the ability to carry out those inclinations, a person or object providing a *suitable target* for the offender, and *absence of guardians* capable of preventing violations. We emphasize that the lack of any one of these elements normally is sufficient to prevent such violations from occurring. Though guardianship is implicit in everyday life, it usually is marked by the absence of violations, hence it is easy to overlook. While police action is analyzed widely, guardianship by ordinary citizens of one another and property as they go about routine activities may be one of the most neglected elements in sociological research on crime, especially since it links seemingly unrelated social roles and relationships to the occurrence or absence of illegal acts.

The conjunction of these minimal elements can be used to assess how social structure may affect the tempo of each type of violation. That is, the probability that a violation will occur at any specific time and place might be taken as a function of the convergence of likely offenders and suitable targets in the absence of capable guardians. Through consideration of how trends and fluctuations in social conditions affect the frequency of this convergence of criminogenic circumstances, an explanation of temporal trends in crime rates can be constructed....

The Ecological Nature of Illegal Acts

Since illegal activities must feed upon other activities, the spatial and temporal structure of routine legal activities should play an important role in determining the location, type and quantity of illegal acts occurring in a given community or society. Moreover, one can analyze how the structure of community organization as well as the level of technology in a society provide the circumstances under which crime can thrive. For example, technology and organization affect the capacity of persons with criminal inclinations to overcome their targets, as well as affecting the ability of guardians to contend with potential offenders by using whatever protective tools, weapons and skills they have at their disposal. Many technological advances designed for legitimate purposes—including the automobile, small power tools, hunting weapons, highways, telephones, etc.—may enable offenders to carry out their own work more effectively or may assist people in protecting their own or someone else's person or property.

Not only do routine legitimate activities often provide the wherewithal to commit offenses or to guard against others who do so, but they also provide offenders with suitable targets. Target suitability is likely to reflect such things as value (i.e., the material or symbolic desirability of a personal or property target for offenders), physical visibility, access, and the inertia of a target against illegal treatment by offenders (including the weight, size, and attached or locked features of property inhibiting its illegal removal and the physical capacity of personal victims to resist attackers with or without weapons). Routine production activities probably affect the suitability of consumer goods for illegal removal by determining their value and weight. Daily activities may affect the location of property and personal targets in visible and accessible places at particular times. These activities also may cause people to have on hand objects that can be used as weapons for criminal acts or self-protection or to be preoccupied with tasks which reduce their capacity to discourage or resist offenders.

While little is known about conditions that affect the convergence of potential offenders, targets and guardians, this is a potentially rich source of propositions about crime rates. For example, daily work activities separate many people from those they trust and the property they value. Routine activities also bring together at various times of day or night persons of different background, sometimes in the presence of facilities, tools or weapons which influence the commission or avoidance of illegal acts. Hence, the timing of work, schooling and leisure may be of central importance for explaining crime rates....

Microlevel Assumptions of the Routine Activity Approach

The theoretical approach taken here specifies that crime rate trends in the post–World War II United States are related to patterns of what we have called routine activities. We define these as any recurrent and prevalent activities which provide for basic population and individual needs, whatever their biological or cultural origins. Thus routine activities would include formalized work, as well as the provision of standard food, shelter, sexual outlet, leisure, social interaction, learning and childrearing. These activities may go well beyond the minimal levels needed to prevent a population's extinction, so long as their prevalence and recurrence makes them a part of everyday life.

Routine activities may occur (1) at home, (2) in jobs away from home, and (3) in other activities away from home. The latter may involve primarily household members or others. We shall argue that, since World War II, the United States has experienced a major shift of routine activities away from the first category into the remaining ones, especially those nonhousehold activities involving nonhousehold members. In particular, we shall argue that this

shift in the structure of routine activities increases the probability that motivated offenders will converge in space and time with suitable targets in the absence of capable guardians, hence contributing to significant increases in the points in the direct-contact predatory crime rates over these years.

If the routine activity approach is valid, then we should expect to find evidence for a number of empirical relationships regarding the nature and distribution of predatory violations. For example, we would expect routine activities performed within or near the home and among family or other primary groups to entail lower risk of criminal victimization because they enhance guardianship capabilities. We should also expect that routine daily activities affect the location of property and personal targets in visible and accessible places at particular times, thereby influencing their risk of victimization. Furthermore, by determining their size and weight and in some cases their value, routine production activities should affect the suitability of consumer goods for illegal removal. Finally, if the routine activity approach is useful for explaining the paradox presented earlier, we should find that the circulation of people and property, the size and weight of consumer items etc., will parallel changes in crime rate trends for the post-World War II United States.

The veracity of the routine activity approach can be assessed by analyses of both microlevel and macrolevel interdependencies of human activities. While consistency at the former level may appear noncontroversial, or even obvious, one nonetheless needs to show that the approach does not contradict existing data before proceeding to investigate the latter level.

Empirical Assessment

Circumstances and Location of Offenses

The routine activity approach specifies that household and family activities entail lower risk of criminal victimization than nonhousehold-nonfamily activities, despite the problems in measuring the former.

National estimates from large-scale government victimization surveys in 1973 and 1974 support this generalization (see methodological information in Hindelang et al., 1976: Appendix 6). Table 36.1 presents several incident-victimization rates per 100,000 population ages 12 and older. Clearly, the rates in Panels A and B are far lower at or near home than elsewhere and far lower among relatives than others. The data indicate that risk of victimization varies directly with social distance between offender and victim. Panel C of this table indicates, furthermore, that risk of lone victimization far exceeds the risk of victimization for groups. These relationships are strengthened by considering time budget evidence that, on the average, Americans spend 16.26 hours per day at home, 1.38 hours on streets, in parks, etc., and 6.36 hours in other places (Szalai, 1972: 795). Panel D of Table 36.1 presents our estimates of victimization per billion person-hours spent in such locations. For example, personal larceny rates (with contact) are 350 times higher at the hands of strangers in streets than at the hands of nonstrangers at home. Separate computations from 1973 victimization data (USDJ, 1976: Table 48) indicate that there were two motor vehicle thefts per million vehicle-hours parked at or near home, 55 per million vehicle-hours in streets, parks, playgrounds, school grounds or parking lots, and 12 per million vehicle-hours elsewhere. While the direction of these relationships is not surprising, their magnitudes should be noted. It appears that risk of criminal victimization varies dramatically among the circumstances and locations in which people place themselves and their property.

TABLE 36.1 Incident-Specific Risk Rates for Rape, Robbery, Assault and Personal Larceny with Contact, United States, 1974

		Rape	Robbery	Assault	Personal Larceny with Contact	Total
A.* PLACE OF RESIDENCE	In or near home	63	129	572	75	839
	Elsewhere	119	584	1,897	1,010	3,610
B.* VICTIM–OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP	(Lone Offender)					
	Relative	7	13	158	5	183
	Well Known	23	30	333	30	416
	Casual Acquaintance	11	26	308	25	370
	Don't Know/Sight Only	106	227	888	616	1,837
	(Multiple Offender)					
	Any Known	10***	68	252	43	373
	All Strangers	25***	349	530	366	1,270

		Rape	Robbery	Assault	Personal Larceny with Contact	Total
C.* NUMBER OF VICTIMS	One	179	647	2,116	1,062	4,004
	Two	3	47	257	19	326
	Three	0	13	53	3	9
	Four Plus	0	6	43	1	50
D.** LOCATION AND RELATIONSHIP (sole offender only)	Home, Stranger	61	147	345	103	654
	Home, Nonstranger	45	74	620	22	761
	Street, Stranger	1,370	7,743	15,684	7,802	32,460
	Street, Nonstranger	179	735	5,777	496	7,167
	Elsewhere, Stranger	129	513	1,934	2,455	4,988
	Elsewhere, Nonstranger	47	155	1,544	99	1,874

* Calculated from Hindelang et al., 1977: Tables 3.16, 3.18, 3.27, 3.28. Rates are per 100,000 persons ages 12 and over.

** See fn. 6 for source. Rates are per billion person-hours in stated locations.

*** Based on white data only due to lack of suitable sample size for nonwhites as victims of rape with multiple offenders.

Target Suitability

Another assumption of the routine activity approach is that target suitability influences the occurrence of direct-contact predatory violations. Though we lack data to disaggregate all major components of target suitability (i.e., value, visibility, accessibility and inertia), together they imply that expensive and movable durables, such as vehicles and electronic appliances, have the highest risk of illegal removal.

As a specific case in point, we compared the 1975 composition of stolen property reported in the Uniform Crime Report (FBI, 1976: Tables 26–7) with national data on personal consumer expenditures for goods (CEA, 1976: Tables 13–16) and to appliance industry estimates of the value of shipments the same year (*Merchandising Week*, 1976). We calculated that $26.44 in motor vehicles and parts were stolen for each $100 of these goods consumed in 1975, while $6.81 worth of electronic appliances were stolen per $100 consumed. Though these estimates are subject to error in citizen and police estimation, what is important here is their size relative to other rates. For example, only 8¢ worth of nondurables and 12¢ worth of furniture and nonelectronic household durables were stolen per $100 of each category consumed, the motor vehicle risk being, respectively, 330 and 220 times as great. Though we lack data on the "stocks" of goods subject to risk, these "flow" data clearly support our assumption that vehicles and electronic appliances are greatly overrepresented in thefts.

The 1976 Buying Guide issue of *Consumer Reports* (1975) indicates why electronic appliances are an excellent retail value for a thief. For example, a Panasonic car tape player is worth $30 per lb., and a Phillips phonograph cartridge is valued at over $5,000 per lb., while large appliances such as refrigerators and washing machines are only worth $1 to $3 per lb. Not surprisingly, burglary data for the District of Columbia in 1969 (Scarr, 1972: Table 9) indicate that home entertainment items alone constituted nearly four times as many stolen items as clothing, food, drugs, liquor,

and tobacco combined and nearly eight times as many stolen items as office supplies and equipment. In addition, 69% of national thefts classified in 1975 (FBI, 1976: Tables 1, 26) involve automobiles, their parts or accessories, and thefts from automobiles or thefts of bicycles. Yet radio and television sets plus electronic components and accessories totaled only 0.10% of the total truckload tonnage terminated in 1973 by intercity motor carriers, while passenger cars, motor vehicle parts and accessories, motorcycles, bicycles, and their parts, totaled only 5.5% of the 410 million truckload tons terminated (ICC, 1974). Clearly, portable and movable durables are reported stolen in great disproportion to their share of the value and weight of goods circulating in the United States.

Family Activities and Crime Rates

One would expect that persons living in single-adult households and those employed outside the home are less obligated to confine their time to family activities within households. From a routine activity perspective, these persons and their households should have higher rates of predatory criminal victimization. We also expect that adolescents and young adults who are perhaps more likely to engage in peer group activities rather than family activities will have higher rates of criminal victimization. Finally, married persons should have lower rates than others.... We note that victimization rates appear to be related inversely to age and are lower for persons in "less active" statuses (e.g., keeping house, unable to work, retired) and persons in intact marriages. A notable exception is ... where persons unable to work appear more likely to be victimized by rape, robbery and personal larceny with contact than are other "inactive persons." Unemployed persons also have unusually high rates of victimization. However, these rates are consistent with the routine activity approach offered here: the high rates of victimization suffered by the unemployed may reflect their residential proximity to high concentrations of potential offenders as well as their age and racial composition, while handicapped persons have high risk of personal victimization because they are less able to resist motivated offenders. Nonetheless, persons who keep house have noticeably lower rates of victimization than those who are employed, unemployed, in school or in the armed forces....

Burglary and robbery victimization rates are about twice as high for persons living in single-adult households as for other persons in each age group examined. Other victimization data (USDJ, 1976: Table 21) indicate that, while household victimization rates tend to vary directly with household size, larger households have lower rates per person. For example, the total household victimization rates (including burglary, household larceny, and motor vehicle theft) per 1,000 households were 168 for single-person households and 326 for households containing six or more persons. Hence, six people distributed over six single-person households experience an average of 1,008 household victimizations, more than three times as many as one six-person household. Moreover, age of household head has a strong relationship to a household's victimization rate for these crimes. For households headed by persons under 20, the motor vehicle theft rate is nine times as high, and the burglary and household larceny rates four times as high as those for households headed by persons 65 and over (USDJ, 1976: Table 9).

While the data presented in this section were not collected originally for the purpose of testing the routine activity approach, our efforts to rework them for these purposes have proven fruitful. The routine activity approach is consistent with the data examined and, in addition, helps to accommodate within a rather simple and coherent analytical framework certain findings which, though not necessarily new, might otherwise be attributed only "descriptive" significance. In the next section, we examine macrosocial trends as they relate to trends in crime rates.

Changing Trends in Routine Activity Structure and Parallel Trends in Crime Rates

The main thesis presented here is that the dramatic increase in the reported crime rates in the U.S. since 1960 is linked to changes in the routine activity structure of American society and to a corresponding increase in target suitability and decrease in guardian presence. If such a thesis has validity, then we should be able to identify these social trends and show how they relate to predatory criminal victimization rates.

Trends in Human Activity Patterns

The decade 1960–1970 experienced noteworthy trends in the activities of the American population. For example, the percent of the population consisting of female college students increased 118% (USBC, 1975: Table 225). Married female labor force participant rates increased 31% (USBC, 1975: Table 563), while the percent of the population living as primary individuals increased by 34% (USBC, 1975: Table 51; see also Kobrin, 1976). We gain some further insight into changing routine activity patterns by comparing hourly data for 1960 and 1971 on households *unattended* by persons ages 14 or over when U.S. census interviewers first called.... These data suggest that the proportion of households unattended at 8 a.m. increased by almost half between 1960 and 1971. One also finds increases in rates of out-of-town travel, which provides greater opportunity for both daytime and nighttime burglary of residences. Between 1960 and 1970, there was a 72% increase in state and national park visits per capita (USBC, 1975), a 144% increase in the percent of plant workers eligible for three weeks vacation (BLS, 1975: Table 116), and a 184% increase in overseas travelers per 100,000 population (USBC, 1975: Table 366). The National Travel Survey, conducted as part of the U.S. Census Bureau's Census of Transportation, confirms the general trends, tallying an 81% increase in the number of vacations taken by Americans from 1967 to 1972, a five-year period (USBC, 1973a: Introduction).

The dispersion of activities away from house-holds appears to be a major recent social change. Although this decade also experienced an important 31% increase in the percent of the population ages 15–24, age structure change was only one of many social trends occurring during the period, especially trends in the circulation of people and property in American society.

The importance of the changing activity structure is underscored by taking a brief look at demographic changes between the years 1970 and 1975, a period of continuing crime rate increments. Most of the recent changes in age structure relevant to crime rates already had occurred by 1970; indeed, the proportion of the population ages 15–24 increased by only 6% between 1970 and 1975, compared with a 15% increase during the five years 1965 to 1970. On the other hand, major changes in the structure of routine activities continued during these years. For example, in only five years, the estimated proportion of the population consisting of husband-present, married women in the labor force households increased by 11%, while the estimated number of non-husband-wife households per 100,000 population increased from 9,150 to 11,420, a 25% increase (USBC, 1976: Tables 50, 276; USBC, 1970–1975). At the same time, the percent of population enrolled in higher education increased 16% between 1970 and 1975.

Related Property Trends and Their Relation to Human Activity Patterns

Many of the activity trends mentioned above normally involve significant investments in durable goods. For example, the dispersion of population across relatively more households (especially non-husband-wife households) enlarges the market for durable goods such as television sets and automobiles. Women participating in the labor force and both men and women enrolled in college provide a market for automobiles. Both work and travel often involve the purchase of major movable or portable durables and their use away from home.

Considerable data are available which indicate that sales of consumer goods changed dramatically between 1960 and 1970 (as did their size and weight), hence providing more suitable property available for theft. For example, during this decade, constant-dollar personal consumer expenditures in the United States for motor vehicles and parts increased by 71%, while constant-dollar expenditures for other durables increased by 105% (calculated from CEA, 1976: Table B-16). In addition, electronic household appliances and small household shipments increased from 56.2 to 119.7 million units (*Electrical Merchandising Week,* 1964; *Merchandising Week,* 1973). During the same decade, appliance imports increased in value by 681% (USBC, 1975: Table 1368).

This same period appears to have spawned a revolution in small durable product design which further feeds the opportunity for crime to occur. Relevant data from the 1960 and 1970 Sears catalogs on the weight of many consumer durable goods were examined. Sears is the nation's largest retailer and its policy of purchasing and relabeling standard manufactured goods makes its catalogs a good source of data on widely merchandised consumer goods. The lightest television listed for sale in 1960 weighed 38 lbs., compared with 15 lbs. for 1970. Thus, the lightest televisions were 2½ times as heavy in 1960 as 1970. Similar trends are observed for dozens of other goods listed in the Sears catalog. Data from *Consumer Reports Buying Guide,* published in December of 1959 and 1969, show similar changes for radios, record players, slide projectors, tape recorders, televisions, toasters and many other goods. Hence, major declines in weight between 1960 and 1970 were quite significant for these and other goods, which suggests that the consumer goods market may be producing many more targets suitable for theft. In general, one finds rapid growth in property suitable for illegal removal and in household and individual exposure to attack during the years 1960–1975.

Related Trends in Business Establishments

Of course, as households and individuals increased their ownership of small durables, businesses also increased the value of the merchandise which they transport and sell as well as the money involved in these transactions. Yet the Census of Business conducted in 1958, 1963, 1967, and 1972 indicate that the number of wholesale, retail, service, and public warehouse establishments (including establishments owned by large organizations) was a nearly constant ratio of one for every 16 persons in the United States. Since more goods and money were distributed over a relatively fixed number of business establishments, the tempo of business activity per establishment apparently was increasing. At the same time, the percent of the population employed as sales clerks or salesmen in retail trade declined from 1.48% to 1.27% between 1960 and 1970, a 14.7% decline (USBC, 1975: Table 589).

Though both business and personal property increased, the changing pace of activities appears to have exposed the latter to greater relative risk of attack, whether at home or elsewhere, due to the dispersion of goods among many more households, while concentrating goods in business establishments. However, merchandise in retail establishments with heavy volume and few employees to guard it probably is exposed to major increments in risk of illegal removal than is most other business property.

Composition of Crime Trends

If these changes in the circulation of people and property are in fact related to crime trends, the *composition* of the latter should reflect this. We expect relatively greater increases in personal and household victimization as compared with most business victimizations, while shoplifting should increase more rapidly than other types of thefts from businesses. We expect personal offenses at the hands of strangers to manifest greater increases than such offenses at the hands of non-strangers. Finally, residential burglary rates should increase more in daytime than nighttime.

The available time series on the composition of offenses confirm these expectations. For example … commercial burglaries declined from 60% to 36% of the total, while daytime residential burglaries increased from 16% to 33%. Unlike the other crimes against business, shoplifting increased its share. Though we lack trend data on the circumstances of other violent offenses, murder data confirm our expectations. Between 1963 and 1975, felon-type murders increased from 17% to 32% of the total. Compared with a 47% increase in the rate of relative killings in this period, we calculated a 294% increase in the murder rate at the hands of known or suspected felon types.

Thus the trends in the composition of recorded crime rates appear to be highly consistent with the activity structure trends noted earlier. In the next section we apply the routine activity approach in order to model crime rate trends and social change in the post–World War II United States.

The Relationship of the Household Activity Ratio to Five Annual Official Index Crime Rates in the United States, 1947–1974

In this section, we test the hypothesis that aggregate official crime rate trends in the United States vary directly over time with the dispersion of activities away from family and household. The limitations of annual time series data do not allow construction of direct measures of changes in hourly activity patterns, or quantities, qualities and movements of exact stocks of household durable goods, but the Current Population Survey does provide related time series on labor force and household structure. From these data, we calculate annually (beginning in 1947) a household activity ratio by adding the number of married, husband-present female labor force participants (source: BLS, 1975: Table 5) to the number of non-husband-wife households (source: USBC, 1947–1976), dividing this sum by the total number of households in the U.S. (source: USBC, 1947–1976). This calculation provides an estimate of the proportion of American households in year *t* expected to be most highly exposed to risk of personal and property victimization due to the dispersion of their activities away from family and household and/or their likelihood of owning extra sets of durables subject to high risk of attack. Hence, the household activity ratio should vary directly with official index crime rates.

Our empirical goal in this section is to test this relationship, with controls for those variables which other researchers have linked empirically to crime rate trends in the United States. Since various researchers have found such trends to increase with the proportion of the population in teen and young adult years (Fox, 1976; Land and Felson, 1976; Sagi and Wellford, 1968; Wellford, 1973), we include the population ages 15–24 per 100,000 resident population in year *t* as our first control variable (source: USBC, various years). Others (e.g., Brenner, 1976a; 1976b) have found unemployment rates to vary directly with official crime rates over time, although this relationship elsewhere has been shown to be empirically questionable (see Mansfield et al., 1974: 463; Cohen and Felson, 1979). Thus, as our second control variable, we take the standard annual unemployment rate (per 100 persons ages 16 and over) as a measure of the business cycle (source: BLS, 1975).

Four of the five crime rates that we utilize here (forcible rape, aggravated assault, robbery and burglary) are taken from FBI estimates of offenses per 100,000 U.S. population (as revised and reported in OMB, 1973).... For our homicide indicator we employ the homicide mortality rate taken from the vital statistics data collected by the Bureau of the Census (various years)....

Findings

Our time-series analysis for the years 1947–1974 consistently revealed positive and statistically significant relationships between the household activity ratio and each official crime rate change....

Discussion

In our judgment many conventional theories of crime (the adequacy of which usually is evaluated by cross-sectional data, or no data at all) have difficulty accounting for the annual changes in crime rate trends in the post–World War II United States. These theories may prove useful in explaining crime trends during other periods, within specific communities, or in particular subgroups of the population. Longitudinal aggregate data for the United States, however, indicate that the trends for many of the presumed causal variables in these theoretical structures are in a direction opposite to those hypothesized to be the causes of crime. For example, during the decade 1960–1970, the percent of the population below the low-income level declined 44% and the unemployment rate declined 186%. Central city population as a share of the whole population declined slightly, while the percent of foreign stock declined 0.1%, etc. (see USBC, 1975: 654, 19, 39).

On the other hand, the convergence in time and space of three elements (motivated offenders, suitable targets, and the absence of capable guardians) appears useful for understanding crime rate trends. The lack of any of these elements is sufficient to prevent the occurrence of a successful direct-contact predatory crime. The convergence in time and space of suitable targets and the absence of capable guardians can lead to large increases in crime rates without any increase or change in the structural conditions that motivate individuals to engage in crime. Presumably, had the social indicators of the variables hypothesized to be the causes of crime in conventional theories changed in the direction of favoring increased crime in the post–World War II United States, the increases in crime rates likely would have been even more staggering than those which were observed. In any event, it is our belief that criminologists have underemphasized the importance of the convergence of suitable targets and the absence of capable guardians in explaining recent increases in the crime rate. Furthermore, the effects of the convergence in time and space of these elements may be multiplicative rather than additive. That is, their convergence by a fixed percentage may produce increases in crime rates far greater than that fixed percentage, demonstrating how some relatively modest social trends can contribute to some relatively large changes in crime rate trends....

Without denying the importance of factors motivating offenders to engage in crime, we have focused specific attention upon violations themselves and the prerequisites for their occurrence. However, the routine activity approach might in the future be applied to the analysis of offenders and their inclinations as well. For example, the structure of primary group activity may affect the likelihood that cultural transmission or social control of criminal inclinations will occur, while the structure of the community may affect the tempo of criminogenic peer group activity. We also may expect that circumstances favorable for carrying out violations contribute to criminal inclinations in the long run by rewarding these inclinations.

We further suggest that the routine activity framework may prove useful in explaining why the criminal justice system, the community and the family have appeared so ineffective in exerting social control since 1960. Substantial increases in the opportunity to carry out predatory violations may have undermined society's mechanisms for social control. For example, it may be difficult for institutions seeking to increase the certainty, celerity and severity of punishment to compete with structural changes resulting in vast increases in the certainty, celerity and value of rewards to be gained from illegal predatory acts.

It is ironic that the very factors which increase the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of life also may increase the opportunity for predatory violations. For example, automobiles provide freedom of movement to offenders as well as average citizens and offer vulnerable targets for theft. College enrollment, female labor force participation,

urbanization, suburbanization, vacations, and new electronic durables provide various opportunities to escape the confines of the household while they increase the risk of predatory victimization. Indeed, the opportunity for predatory crime appears to be enmeshed in the opportunity structure for legitimate activities to such an extent that it might be very difficult to root out substantial amounts of crime without modifying much of our way of life. Rather than assuming that predatory crime is simply an indicator of social breakdown, one might take it as a by product of freedom and prosperity as they manifest themselves in the routine activities of everyday life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to the routine activity approach, it is possible to experience large increases in the crime rate *without* any increase in the supply of motivated offenders. How can this be?
2. What do Cohen and Felson mean by "suitable targets" and "the absence of capable guardians"? Describe how targets and guardianship have changed in the United States since World War II.
3. Describe the "routine activities" in which you engage. How might these activities increase or decrease your chance of criminal victimization?
4. Young people and males have higher rates of criminal victimization. How might the routine activities approach explain this?

37.
The Theory of Target Search*

Paul J. Brantingham

Patricia L. Brantingham

Environmental criminology assumes rational choice on the part of motivated offenders and that opportunity guides their actions. Furthermore, opportunity for offending is presumed to be more plentiful in certain parts of the environment, resulting in the nonrandom patterning of crime events in physical space. Beginning with their 1981 edited book Environmental Criminology, *Paul and Patricia Brantingham have been at the forefront of scholarship that describes more specifically how offenders perceive opportunity and identify targets. Their work has resulted in the overlapping "crime pattern theory" and "target search theory" (also referred to as "offender search theory").*

As this chapter suggests, the Brantinghams have identified four major ways that offenders select targets, which vary in the degree of intent on the part of the offender and the type of crime. First, in proximity crime events, no real search is necessary, as offenders simply find themselves in the immediate presence of a provocative or tempting victim/target and a crime ensues. Provocation-driven assaults, including domestic violence, and temptation-driven theft, including pilfering or embezzlement, are two examples of proximity events.

Second, opportunistic discoveries also involve minimal searching for targets. Here, the offender is not setting out to commit a crime, but happens upon a target deemed "too good to pass up" in the course of daily activities. Since they are unplanned and take place in the course of routine daily activity, opportunistic discoveries often occur near major activity nodes or on or near major transportation paths.

Third, some offenders (typically experienced professionals) have strong intents to commit specific crimes and tend to have particular targets in mind (e.g., banks, casinos, armored cars). Selection of targets is finalized through information-led searches. This search strategy entails the gathering of very specific information regarding the likely target—"probable 'take,' accessibility, ease of doing the crime, possibilities of escape, and risks of getting caught" (*Brantingham and Brantingham, 2013*: 544–545).

Finally, purposive target searches are common among offenders who intend to commit a particular crime but have no specific target in mind. Offenders who choose targets through a purposeful search attempt to balance issues of effort, risk, and profit. As such, offenders more often seek targets that are easily accessible, vulnerable, and valuable. The Brantinghams recognized, however, that the offender's target-selection decision is also hierarchical, or multistaged. Thus, before certain targets are selected, offenders choose a general area in which to operate, usually a place or community that is close by and with which they are familiar (see also Brantingham and Brantingham, 1981, 1993; Taylor and Gottfredson, 1986). In a similar way, offenders have been described as foragers, who "must find a good hunting ground before starting to chase prey" (*Bernasco and Block, 2009*: 96; *see also Bernasco and Nieuwbeerta, 2005*; *Coupe and Blake, 2006*; *Felson, 2006*). *Thus, environments in which*

specific targets are located—not just the specific targets themselves—are key in providing criminal opportunity to offenders.

What sorts of environments are perceived by offenders as advantageous for purposive searches? The Brantinghams suggest that offenders do not roam widely and randomly; so, as with opportunistic discoveries, purposive searches are likely to occur within the geographic space where offenders carry out their routine activities. This space includes offenders' schools, workplaces, shopping or entertainment areas, and, more generally, areas near their residences. Motivated offenders are familiar with these nodes and can readily come into contact with suitable targets at such nodes. Hence, activity nodes generate plentiful opportunities for crime. Major routes that surround and connect various nodes, such as streets and walkways, also provide numerous targets for offenders searching for crime. These major routes, which the Brantinghams refer to as "paths," are therefore likely to host higher-than-average crime events. Some central nodes and paths generate so much opportunity that they become "crime attractors"—places that offenders travel to specifically for crime purposes. The Brantinghams also suggest that offenders sometimes search for targets in areas that are "edges." They describe edge spaces as boundary areas that form the transition from one distinct physical space to another. Given their transitional nature, there are sometimes multiple, conflicting users of edge spaces; those who use adjacent spaces often converge at the edges, creating a "cross-over" of users. Such cross-over provides an abundance of targets for offenders. At the same time, there is often ambiguity in terms of who "owns" and controls edge space, thus diminishing guardianship.

A good deal of research supports both Cornish and Clarke's rational choice perspective on crime events (Chapter 33 in Part X) and the Brantinghams' ideas about offender searches. Specifically, research suggests that offenders search for targets, and thus crime events cluster, in areas that (1) are proximal to offenders' homes (i.e., anchor points), (2) are similar in racial/ethnic composition to the area of offenders' homes, (3) have a large supply of suitable targets, (4) have known vice or crime problems, (5) have a high density of nonresidential land use, and (6) are along or near major travel routes (Bernasco and Block, 2009; Bernasco and Nieuwbeerta, 2005; Braga et al., 2011; Deryol et al., 2016; Rengert and Wasilchick, 2000; Reynald et al., 2008; Weisburd et al., 2012).

References

Bernasco, Wim and Richard Block. 2009. "Where Offenders Choose to Attack: A Discrete Choice Model of Robberies in Chicago." *Criminology* **47**: 93–130.

Bernasco, Wim and Paul Nieuwbeerta. 2005. "How Do Residential Burglars Select Target Areas?" *British Journal of Criminology* **45**: 296–315.

Braga, Anthony A., David M. Hureau, and Andrew V. Papachristos. 2011. "The Relevance of Micro Places to Citywide Robbery Trends: A Longitudinal Analysis of Robbery Incidents at Street Corners and Block Faces in Boston." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **48**: 7–32.

Brantingham, Paul J. and Patricia L. Brantingham, eds. 1981. *Environmental Criminology*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

____. 1993. "Nodes, Paths, and Edges: Considerations on the Complexity of Crime and the Physical Environment." *Environmental Psychology* **13**: 3–28.

____. 2013. "The Theory of Target Search." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 535–553. New York: Oxford University Press.

Coupe, Timothy and Laurence Blake. 2006. "Daylight and Darkness Targeting Strategies and the Risks of Being Seen at Residential Burglaries." *Criminology* **44**: 431–464.

Deryol, Rustu, Pamela Wilcox, Matthew Logan, and John Wooldredge. 2016. “Crime Places in Context: An Illustration of the Multilevel Nature of Hotspot Development.” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **32**: 305–325.

Felson, Marcus. 2006. *Crime and Nature*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rengert, George F. and John Wasilchick. 2000. *Suburban Burglary: A Tale of Two Suburbs*, 2nd edition. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Reynald, Danielle, Margit Averdijk, Henk Elffers, and Wim Bernasco. 2008. “Do Social Barriers Affect Urban Crime Trips? The Effects of Ethnic and Economic Neighbourhood Compositions on the Flow of Crime in The Hague, The Netherlands.” *Built Environment* **34**: 21–31.

Taylor, Ralph B. and Stephen D. Gottfredson. 1986. “Environmental Design, Crime, and Prevention: An Examination of Community Dynamics.” In Albert J. Reiss, Jr. and Michael Tonry (eds.), *Communities and Crime—Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, Volume **8**, pp. 387–416. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Weisburd, David, Elizabeth R. Groff, and Sue-Ming Yang. 2012. *The Criminology of Place: Street Segments and Our Understanding of the Crime Problem*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Criminology approaches an understanding of crime from two very different perspectives. The first perspective focuses on understanding *criminality*—the individual’s propensity to commit crimes. The second focuses on the *criminal event*—the convergence in space and time of law, offender, target, and situation.

Crime understood solely in terms of *criminality* is grounded on the assumption that *criminals* (persons with high levels of criminality) are pathologically different in some way from the vast majority of people who are fundamentally noncriminal. This approach to understanding crime draws on a variety of biological, psychological, and social models of the development of personality and sociality as well as assumptions about the capacity of different levels of society to exercise control over the criminal impulses of individuals and groups. Criminality reduction strategies tend to focus on interventions aimed at changing individual propensity and community control capacity in the long run. This approach assumes that the other elements of a crime are either ubiquitous or irrelevant: to persons with high criminality one target for criminal action is as good as another, and any setting or situation will do because their criminal impulses *must* be acted out some place and some time.

Crime understood from the *criminal event* perspective assumes that convergence of law, offender, target, and situation in space and time is critical. This convergence, in fact, creates the criminal event. While recognizing that the offender is a necessary condition for a criminal event, this approach pays simultaneous attention to the *other* elements of the criminal event in search of interventions that will prevent the crimes even if the offender’s level of criminality remains unchanged. It sets aside the question of whether *criminality* constitutes a normal or pathological aspect of personality or sociality, but assumes that in most other respects most offenders’ behavior patterns are normal, following the same social rhythms and movement routines as those of people who do not engage in crimes.

From this crime event perspective, an understanding of how offenders find criminal targets is very important. Before a criminal event can occur a potential offender must somehow come into the presence of a potential target. A target is some person or place, some institution or object, some process or community to which the offender does something in violation of a criminal prohibition. Some targets are immediately at hand or easy to find. Some targets are highly exposed by their own actions. Some targets are hidden and well protected and must be sought out through considerable effort. The process of locating a target for criminal action can be characterized as a target search. Target selection is the final step in the search process and often involves finding a satisfactory fit between the immediate

situation in which the potential target is found and an offender's learned mental template describing an ideal situation in which to act….

---

* Brantingham, Paul J. and Patricia L. Brantingham. 2013. "The Theory of Target Search." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory, pp. 535–553. New York: Oxford University Press.

Crime Pattern Theory

Fundamental Assumptions of Crime Pattern Theory

Crime pattern theory, which serves as the basis for our theory of target search, is based on four main assumptions (for general statements of crime pattern theory, see Brantingham and Brantingham 1993a, 2008). These are reviewed next.

First, crime events are complex. Crime pattern theory focuses on crime as a complex event that requires many different elements for its occurrence (Brantingham and Brantingham 1993b; Sacco and Kennedy 2007). This places it in sharp contrast with traditional criminology, which is focused on the development of criminal propensity in offenders (see, e.g., Wikström and Sampson 2006; Cullen et al. 2011).

Second, crime is not random. Crime pattern theory observes that neither motivated offenders nor opportunities for crime are randomly or uniformly distributed in space and time. The sites where crimes occur are concentrated. Regardless of whether the crime under consideration is murder or rape, assault or theft, burglary or vandalism, a limited number of sites, times, and situations constitute the space-time loci for the vast majority of offenses.

Third, offenders and victims are not pathological in their use of time and space. Crime pattern theory assumes that people who commit crimes have normal perceptions and make normal use of time and space. Offenders and victims exhibit movement patterns tied to personal activity and awareness spaces that are similar to those of everyone else. The likely location for a crime is near this normal activity and awareness space.

Fourth, criminal opportunities and criminal events are structured. A number of factors in offenders' daily routines, social and physical environment, and perceptions of their world shape access to criminal opportunities and the likelihood that criminal events are possible and, if possible, will occur....

Factors that Structure Criminal Opportunities and Events

First, criminal opportunities and events are structured by routine activities. Daily life plays out through a series of routine activities following common activity clocks such as the morning commute to work or the rhythm of the school year (Chapin 1974; Felson and Boba 2010). Routine activities are anchored to persistent personal activity nodes and travel paths. Routines vary from weekday to weekend and from normal days to holidays, but are generally structured around home, work, school, shopping, entertainment, and recreation points. People develop routine pathways between their anchor points. Over time, people develop strong awareness spaces along these pathways and around their activity nodes (Brantingham and Brantingham 1981b, 1984, 1993b; Cromwell, Olson, and Avary 1991).

Although awareness spaces are personal, they are limited and structured by the built environment so that many people share the same activity nodes and paths. As a consequence, there are general flows of people and activities toward some parts of a city and away from others along predictable paths at predictable times. Criminal activity is primarily a by-product of these routine activity patterns (Cohen and Felson 1979; Felson and Boba 2010; see also Madero-Hernandez and Fisher, 2013). Routine activities of potential offenders generally define both the areas where

and the times when they are likely to commit a crime. The routine activities of potential victims also shape the patterns of crimes.

Second, criminal opportunities and events are structured by the frictions of time and distance. People typically engage in the least time and effort necessary to accomplish some specific activity or goal. This saves time and energy for additional activities and purposes. It also predicts that most of any person's activities will concentrate around a few routine activity nodes in a few small areas or neighborhoods (Orleans 1973; Chapin 1974; Brantingham and Brantingham 1981a; Wiles and Costello 2000)….

Third, criminal opportunities and events are structured by directional bias. People generally have strong directional biases in their travel patterns. These directional biases are shaped by their personal awareness and activity spaces and by the major destination points and pathways of a particular environment….

Directional bias on the part of offenders strongly shapes the spatial patterns of criminal events. Research on the directionality of crime trips on the part of more than 25,000 prolific offenders in British Columbia has shown that a very small angle radiated from an offender's home location will capture half of all the offenses in which they are involved while a radiated angle of 110 degrees will capture the location of virtually all of the offender's crimes (Frank et al. 2011).

Fourth, criminal opportunities and events are structured by activity spaces and awareness spaces. Routine activities shape a person's normal activity space. From that activity space, people develop an awareness space. The awareness space shapes the time and location of future activities, including criminal activities (Carter and Hill 1979; Brantingham and Brantingham 1981b, 1984; Bichler, Swartz, and Orosco 2010)….

Fifth, criminal opportunities and events are structured by social networks. When individuals are making their decisions independently, individual decision processes and crime templates can be treated in a summative fashion; that is, average or typical patterns can be determined by combining the patterns of individuals. Most people do not function as social isolates but rather function within a network of family, friends, and acquaintances. These linkages have varying attributes and influence the activity and awareness spaces and the action decisions of others in the network. Social networks influence criminal activity patterns of the people who belong to them (Browning 2009; McGloin and Piquero 2010).

Sixth, criminal opportunities and events are structured by urban structure. Urban form and structure shape the activity patterns of everyone, including criminals and victims. Key aspects of urban structure considered in crime pattern theory are *nodes* (including *crime generators, crime attractors,* and *crime-neutral areas*), *paths*, and *edges* (Brantingham and Brantingham 1993b.) At the aggregate level, *activity nodes* are gathering places where large numbers of people concentrate for specific purposes: business districts and office buildings, sports stadiums, schools, shopping malls, recreation centers, transit interchanges, churches, and theater districts. At the individual level, activity nodes are the places to which people repeatedly go and at which they spend substantial time: home, work, school, a favorite shopping center, a favorite recreation center, a favorite bar or cinema (Brantingham and Brantingham 1984; Bichler, Swartz, and Orosco 2010).

Crime generators and crime attractors are activity nodes and areas that become crime hot spots for different reasons (Brantingham and Brantingham 1995a). Most cities have some crime generators and crime attractors as well as a preponderance of crime-neutral areas (Sherman, Gartin, and Buerger 1989; Weisburd, Morris, and Groff 2009; Braga, Hurleau, and Papachristos 2011).

Crime generators are particular nodal areas to which large numbers of people are attracted for reasons unrelated to any particular level of criminal motivation they might have or the particular crime they might end up committing.

Crime generators are a result of the summative combination of awareness and activity spaces of large numbers of people acting in the course of daily routines.

Crime attractors are particular places, areas, neighborhoods, or districts which create well-known opportunities for particular types of crime to which intending criminal offenders are attracted because of those known opportunities. They become activity nodes for repeat offenders (Bullock 1955; Sherman, Gartin, and Buerger 1989; Wright and Decker 1994, 1997; Weisburd, Morris, and Groff 2009; Braga, Hurleau, and Papachristos 2011). Crime attractors are a result of the cumulative impact of criminal experience and network communication.

Finally, *crime-neutral areas* neither attract intending offenders because they expect to do a particular crime in the area nor produce crimes by presenting criminal opportunities that are too tempting for the volumes of people passing through them to resist. Instead, they experience occasional crimes by neighborhood insiders. The offense mix in crime-neutral areas is likely to be different from the offense mix at either crime attractor or crime generator locations.

Paths between nodes—transit systems, road networks, walking paths—collect and constrain human activity. The pathways between high activity nodes are also the sites of many offenses. Violent offenses tend to occur at the nodal "end points" of paths. Property crimes occur near high activity nodes, but also occur with some intensity along the paths between nodes….

Beyond nodes and paths, the urban setting is full of perceptual *edges*, places where there is so much difference in characteristic from one part to another that the change is noticeable (Lynch 1960). Some edges between areas are physical, some are social, and some are economic. At an extreme, the house bordering on a river or sitting on a beach is on an edge; the houses behind a commercial strip development and the businesses on the strip form a perceptual edge. Parks have edges. Residential areas have edges. Commercial areas have edges. Land use zoning and transportation planning frequently work in tandem with the result that major roads follow perceptual edges between different types of areas. The major roads themselves can produce an edge between areas or neighborhoods.

Edges can be characterized in a variety of ways. They can be considered in terms of physical barriers or of the strong cognitive images of paths with diverse land uses on either side of a road. Edges describe the limits of perceptual comfort on the part of outsiders or the spatial limits of mutual territorial functioning among a group of people. Edges mark areas of potential territorial conflict between different groups or land uses (Brantingham and Brantingham 1993b; Reynald et al. 2008; Clare, Fernandez, and Morgan 2009; Peeters and Elffers 2010).

Areas that experience high crime rates often fall on edges between distinctly different neighborhoods. Sometimes edges create areas where strangers are more easily accepted because they are frequently and legitimately present, exposing local criminal opportunities to a wider array of potential offenders. Additionally, edges sometimes contain mixtures of land uses and physical features that concentrate criminal opportunities (Brantingham and Brantingham 1975; Herbert and Hyde 1985; Clare, Fernandez, and Morgan 2009).

Seventh, criminal opportunities and events are structured by the environmental backcloth. The environmental backcloth is the set of social, cultural, economic, legal, structural, and physical surroundings—the contexts—in which criminal opportunities form and the other elements of crime merge to make criminal events possible. It includes, among other things, the activities of individuals, of groups, and of organizations….

Eighth, criminal opportunities and events are structured by the journey an offender takes to crime. For any particular offender, his or her pattern of offending will be tied to areas around key personal activity nodes including home, work or school, shopping, recreation, and the homes of friends, family, and acquaintances; and to the paths between them. Crimes will typically occur in places where these nodes and paths intersect with criminal targets at

times and in situations matching the offender's criminal opportunity template (Brantingham and Brantingham 1981b, 1995b)….

Ninth, criminal opportunities and events are structured by whether an offender is an insider or an outsider to an area. In any given neighborhood, crimes might be committed by people who belong to the area and people from outside the area. Their crime patterns are different. *Insiders* are people who know an area well because they have legitimate access to it as residents or workers, for instance, and who belong to the area in a social and cultural sense. Insiders have a better awareness of the area, of the routine daily activities of individuals and families, of workers, and of visitors than outsiders are ever likely to develop. *Outsiders* are people who neither live in nor work in a neighborhood. They are unlikely to know the area beyond its edges and most of their crimes are likely to be committed on or near neighborhood edges….

Tenth, criminal opportunities and events are structured by an offender's crime template. Individuals develop "images" of what surrounds them. These images, representing a process-based perception of objects within a complex environment structured by all the elements discussed earlier, are called mental templates. They are used to make rapid decisions about the existence and exploitability of criminal opportunities (Brantingham and Brantingham 1978)….

The Theory of Target Search

Crime pattern theory argues that criminal events can occur only when a potential offender encounters a criminal opportunity in time and space. Offenders are agents, either passive or active, in producing such encounters. In that sense, criminal events can be viewed as the end points of a target search framed as a decision process or sequence of decision steps taken by a potential offender conditioned, structured, and limited by the potential offender's routine activities and awareness spaces, by urban form, and by the environmental backcloth. Within those limitations, the number and sequence of decision points in the process that leads to a criminal event vary with the offender's intensity of intent, the type and quality of crime involved, and the points in space-time at which targets might be located.

Target searches by offenders can be grouped, roughly, into four main categories: proximity events; opportunistic discoveries; information-led searches; and purposive searches. All of them are conditioned by the principles of crime pattern theory, but in somewhat different ways.

Proximity Events

Proximity events, as their name implies, require no target search by the offender. The victim or target is in the immediate presence of the offender at the moment that some provocation or temptation triggers the criminal action (Brantingham and Brantingham 1978, 1984). Common assaults and domestic homicides are exemplars of provocation-driven proximity events, but robbery also happens in this way (Feeney 1986; Gabor et al. 1987; Wright and Decker 1997). Even when there is a delay between provocation and criminal attack, the identity and location of the target is known to the offender from the interaction constituting the provocation. Temptation-driven proximity exemplars could include employee pilfering of office supplies or shop inventory and many forms of embezzlement.

Opportunistic Discoveries

A large proportion of all criminal events are purely opportunistic in the sense that the offender was engaged in some noncriminal activity, discovered an opportunity too good to resist during the course of that activity, and acted on the opportunity—either immediately or relatively soon thereafter. The offender was not intending to commit a crime nor was the offender searching for a target when the opportunity was discovered. Bruce Jacobs (2010) has described this process as *serendipity*. No crime was intended and no target search occurred. As Marcus Felson and Ronald Clarke have argued, sometimes opportunity makes the crime (1998).

The potential offender, however, may well have been receptive to environmental cues indicating criminal opportunity in the course of legitimate activity (see, e.g., Letkemann 1973). Jacobs (2010)has argued that legitimate activities may sometimes be unconsciously or quasi-deliberately structured by potential offenders to take them to places and along pathways that are likely to provide criminal opportunities. Such activity structuring falls short of a target search as such but amounts to more than simple serendipity. At some point structured serendipity changes into a purposive search for the target of an intended crime. Assessing that transition may require the use of fuzzy mathematics (Brantingham et al. 2009; Frank et al. 2010).

Understanding the general activity patterns in the city provides understanding of the patterns in opportunistic crime. The aggregate patterns in opportunistic crimes are structured by the same constraints and contingencies that structure legitimate activities: work and social routines and rhythms; patterns in land use and transportation; the distribution of activity generators and attractors; and the underlying physical and social backcloth of the city. Individual patterns of opportunistic crime will be structured by that individual's awareness and activity spaces.

Opportunistic crimes can be expected to concentrate in those neighborhoods in which known criminals reside. They will also concentrate in and around crime generators—high activity points such as transit stations, schools, sports stadiums, entertainment districts, shopping centers—as well as along the arterial travel paths between residential neighborhoods and activity centers.

Information-Led Target Searches

Some crime trips, particularly those undertaken by persistent professional criminals, are organized around information about the location of specific types of targets (for instance, banks or jewelry stores) or about a specific space-time location of a very specific target (a drug shipment for hijacking; an armored car moving cash to refill automatic teller machines [ATMs]; a hired murderer's intended victim; a wealthy home whose occupants will be going on a Caribbean cruise). These constitute information-led crimes in which the target search takes the form of intelligence gathering by an intending criminal followed by very specific situational examination of the selected crime site before the criminal action is taken.

When the crime is directed at some specific type of business, the crime site is determined by the specific spatial locations of a specific type of target—such as bank branches—and the specific bank that will be robbed is selected by examination of different bank branches at different locations. Those bank locations that are examined, or "cased," often fall within the awareness and activity spaces of the offender. Bank branches in this context can be seen as a set of crime attractors from which a specific target will be selected. Detailed attention to potential site specifics that relate to probable "take," accessibility, ease of doing the crime, possibilities of escape, and risks of getting caught is given to the set of potential targets in the process of choosing which one to rob (Feeney 1986; Walsh 1986; Bennett 1989; Gill 2000; Hakim, Rengert, and Shachmurove 2001; Bichler-Robertson and Potchak 2002; Fleming 2003).

At times, the target or victim is identified through intelligence gathering—that is, by gathering information from a social network, by receiving information from "tipsters" or otherwise (Shover 1973, 1991). The crime site itself may be located in a crime generating, a crime attracting, or a crime neutral area—the critical element is the presence of the intended target or victim. The search involved in such intelligence-led crime is a search for a situation that fits the offender's crime template. For fixed location targets, the search for the right situation becomes a question of timing. For mobile targets, the search involves finding a satisfactory place, time, situation, and target convergence. Understanding this kind of target search requires both the use of social network analysis (e.g., Malm, Kinney, and Pollard 2008) and the use of powerful simulation modeling techniques (e.g., Brantingham and Tita 2008; Groff 2008; Jenkins, Malleson, and Evans 2009; Malleson and Brantingham 2009; Bosse, Elffers, and Garritsen 2010; Jones, Brantingham, and Chayes 2010; Iwanski et al. 2011).

Purposive Target Searches

Purposive target searches involve intending offenders who have a particular type of crime in mind but do not have a specific target already chosen. A purposive search unfolds as a multistaged journey and decision process in which the

offender first selects a general target area based on distance from the offender's starting point, directional relation to some major aggregate activity node, physical accessibility, social accessibility, and some presumed supply of targets for the type of crime being contemplated (Brantingham and Brantingham 1978). This initial search may keep the offender in his or her home neighborhood; or it may take the offender to some other, very similar neighborhood with which the offender is familiar; or it may take the offender to some crime attractor—a high aggregate activity point with a presumed concentration of potential targets. Once in the search neighborhood, the offender will look for targets characteristic of the intended crime. Potential individual targets will be assessed in terms of potential payoff, accessibility, ease of criminal action, risk to the offender (both from the target and of being caught) against the offender's mental template of the "ideal" offense situation (Hakim, Rengert, and Shachmurove 2001) in a process described by Derek Cornish as *crime scripting* (1994). Where there is a satisfactory (but not necessarily perfect) fit between the specific potential victim, the situation, and the template, criminal action will likely ensue (Cromwell, Olson, and Avary 1991). To some extent this multistaged model is now seen as roughly akin to optimal foraging theory as it is understood in ecology and anthropology (Brantingham 2006; Bernasco 2009; Johnson, Summers, and Pease 2009).

Note that this target search process will vary over time and from crime to crime as the offender gains more experience in target search and criminal action. Assessment of target viability against the template will vary with the offender's background situation (Shover 1991; Wright and Decker 1994, 1997) and will be modified by the offender's state of sobriety and the type of substance he or she might have used (Cromwell, Olson, and Avary 1991). This search process may follow a conscious, rigorously rational process but is much more likely to occur in a less conscious, unarticulated manner.

The rules of crime pattern theory predict that purposive target searches will be structured and constrained in predictable ways. This suggests that propositions can be formulated about how offenders will go about conducting their target searches. These propositions are important in advancing the theory and facilitating the empirical testing of target search theory. We list 13 propositions.

1. Purposive target searches will cover only a short distance and a small area within the immediate neighborhood given a sufficient array of local opportunities.
2. The expansion of the purposive target search to areas surrounding the offender's anchor point will be constrained by neighborhood edges or borders (Brantingham and Brantingham 1975; Reynald et al. 2008). In particular, low income areas and segregated areas frequently have a large number of residents who feel uncomfortable in other neighborhoods and have limited knowledge of areas beyond their immediate neighborhoods.
3. Criminal search activity that expands beyond the immediate neighborhood will range in the direction of some major activity node, often the central business district or a regional shopping mall (Baldwin and Bottoms 1976; Frank et al. 2011).
4. The offender's target search is unlikely to expand outside the immediate anchor point neighborhood to areas of substantially different character; but is likely to expand along the travel path toward some major activity node into the next neighborhood displaying both a similar character to that of the anchor point neighborhood and an adequate supply of opportunities (Bernasco 2006).
5. A purposive target search that expands outside the immediate anchor point neighborhood will often be drawn to a major activity node rather than to any intervening criminal opportunities (Baldwin and Bottoms 1976; Felson 1986; Iwanski et al. 2011).

6. Purposive target searches that leave the anchor point neighborhood will move to and along traffic arterials (Wilcox 1973; Beavon, Brantingham, and Brantingham 1994; Weisburd, Morris, and Groff 2009).
7. Purposive target searches will travel along traffic arterials in the direction of some major activity node (Felson 1986; Rengert 1988; Brantingham, Brantingham, and Wong 1990; Groff, Weisburd, and Yang 2010; Frank et al. 2011).
8. Given competing activity nodes with similar arrays of opportunities and levels of surveillance, volumes of purposive target searches conducted at the nodes will vary with the different nodes' activity volumes; perceptual distance from the offender's anchor point; path angle from the anchor point; and, accessibility along the best Dijkstra path from the offender's anchor (Beavon, Brantingham, and Brantingham 1994; Iwanski et al. 2011).
9. An offender's purposive target search will range off a traffic arterial only into neighborhoods that have permeable, predictable, and highly connected internal path networks (White 1990; Beavon, Brantingham, and Brantingham 1994).
10. Purposive target searches will not range into neighborhoods that are substantially different in social, economic, or demographic character from an offender's anchor point neighborhood (Pyle 1974; Rengert and Wasilchick 1985; Wright and Decker 1994, 1997; Reynald et al. 2008; Bernasco and Kooistra 2010).
11. Purposive target searches are unlikely to range across the major physical and social barriers within a city (Clare, Fernandez, and Morgan 2009; Peeters and Elffers 2010).
12. Purposive target searches utilizing a rapid transit system will stay largely confined to areas close to the transit stations and will not range far into areas between stations (Levine and Wachs 1985; Barclay et al. 1996; Block and Davis 1996; Buckley 1996).
13. Successful purposive target searches are likely to result in repeated exploitation of opportunities within the target neighborhood until those opportunities have been exhausted or facilitative neighborhood conditions have been changed in response (Maguire 1982; Johnson et al. 2007; Brantingham and Tita 2008; Johnson, Summers, and Pease 2009).

Conclusion

Crime pattern theory argues that criminal events can occur only when there is a convergence of law, offender, and target at some specific place and time in a context in which taking criminal action makes sense from the perspective of the offender. The rules of crime pattern theory set out how, where, and when such convergences can occur but note that offender agency can play an important part in the convergence. In that sense, offender agency can be examined as a target search process. Four types of target search, involving different types and intensities of criminal intention can be identified: proximity events; opportunistic discoveries; information-led target searches; and purposive target searches.

The first three types of target search provide little scope for analysis or intervention. Proximity events involve criminal action against something or someone already in the immediate presence of the offender. Opportunistic discoveries involve criminal action against some thing or person discovered in the course of normal, noncriminal activities. Information-led searches involve development of information about some very specific target through social networking and other forms of information gathering. Once the information has been gathered, the specific target is identified. No further search is needed. The fourth category, purposive target searches, provides greater scope for analysis. Using the rules of crime pattern theory, supported by the empirical literature, 13 propositions were presented describing how such target searches are likely to be conducted. These propositions could be used to predict the risks posed to different neighborhoods and locations by known offenders and could be used to inform geographic profiling (Rossmo 2000).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the nodes, paths, and edges that make up your activity space? Based on your own perceptions, what part of this activity space offers the most crime opportunity? Explain.
2. What are some crime-generating nodes in the city/town in which you live and/or go to school? Are you aware of any crime attractors? What about crime-neutral areas?
3. How does target selection differ across proximity events, opportunistic discoveries, information-led searches, and purposive searches?
4. Using Brantingham and Brantingham's propositions regarding purposive target searches, how at risk do you think homes in your neighborhood are for experiencing burglary? Explain.

38.
Place Management Theory*

Tamara D. Madensen

John E. Eck

Madensen and Eck (2013) present a place management theory that extends work in the routine activities theory tradition (Cohen and Felson, 1979). They build upon a "second-generation" routine activities theory (referred to as the crime triangle) *specifying that crime results from the convergence of an offender and a suitable target* at a particular place. *This version of routine activities theory also suggests that various controllers can prevent crime even if an offender and target do converge at a place. Controllers include (1) "handlers"—people who keep a motivated offender out of trouble; (2) "guardians"—people who protect potential victims/targets from theft, attack, or damage; and (3) "place managers"—owners of proprietary places, with variable degrees of responsibility (e.g., employees with assigned or diffuse responsibility, customers with general responsibility; see also Eck, 1994; Felson, 1995). Madensen and Eck (2013) elaborate extensively on place managers as controllers, discussing the various ways they can prevent crime.*

Place management is theorized as a set of four processes (referred to as ORCA) that managers engage in with respect to their proprietary places: (1) Organization *of space—the selection of location and design/theme as well as the physical upkeep of the place; (2)* Regulation *of conduct—the promotion versus prohibition of certain activities within the place; (3)* Control *of access—the inclusion versus exclusion of individuals or groups at the place; and (4)* Acquisition *of resources—the process of securing money and other resources for profit and for funding or otherwise supporting organization of space, regulation of conduct, and control of access. Each of the ORCA processes can impact crime at a location. As an example, a bar manager who allows patrons of any age to enter the establishment (a "control of access" decision) may provide underage customers with access to alcohol, thereby increasing their risks of victimization. In another example, a bar manager who decides to establish a sports theme (an "organization of space" decision) may attract fans from rival teams for game watching, thus increasing the chance for brawls.*

Madensen and Eck (2013) also posit that proprietary places that are crime site locations are part of a network of other places that play other roles in crime and therefore should be examined more closely for prevention purposes. In particular, they identify three additional types of places beyond the crime site itself that play a role in crime: (1) convergent settings—places where potential offenders routinely meet; (2) comfort spaces—places that offenders use as safe houses, stash locations, and so on; and (3) corrupt spots—places that promote crime at other places (i.e., a metal recycling company encourages copper theft). In sum, Madensen and Eck (2013) offer a view of proprietary places that allows for creative thinking about crime prevention beyond standard police patrols. In particular, regulatory action directed at proprietary places offers great promise.

References

Cohen, Lawrence E. and Marcus Felson. 1979. "Social Change and Crime Rate Trends: A Routine Activity Approach." *American Sociological Review*, **44**: 588–608.

Eck, John E. 1994. *Drug Markets and Drug Places: A Case Control Study of the Spatial Structure of Illicit Drug Dealing*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park.

Felson, Marcus. 1995. "Those Who Discourage Crime." In John E. Eck and David Weisburd (eds.), *Crime and Place: Crime Prevention Studies*, Volume **4**, pp. 53–66. Monsey, NY: Criminal Justice Press.

Madensen, Tamara D. and John E. Eck. 2013. "Crime Places and Place Management." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 554–578. New York: Oxford University Press.

This chapter examines why some places have extraordinarily high crime levels while most places have little or no crime, and how place management contributes to this disparity (see Appendix A—Glossary of Crime-Place Terms and Concepts at the end of this chapter). In particular, we review empirical studies and associated theory related to crime at places (i.e., addresses, buildings, and land parcels) and the management of these locations. Place management is central to understanding why some places are more crime prone than others and for developing policies to reduce crimes at these locations. For this reason, extensions of routine activities theory, including the concept of place management, are of particular interest. Empirical evidence and everyday observations also point to the importance of place management. When places lack effective managers, crime is more likely to occur. This explains why fights between students tend to occur before or after school rather than in the classroom, why bar patrons are more likely to fight in parking lots than inside the facility, and why items are more often stolen from front yards and open garages than from inside homes….

---

* Reprinted with permission from: Madensen, Tamara D. and John E. Eck. (2013). Crime places and place management. In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 579–601. New York: Oxford University Press. Note: Tamara D. Madensen is now known as Tamara D. Herold.

What is a place?

Place is an ambiguous term. When used, it brings to mind a wide array of locations. If told that your colleagues have been "someplace" recently, this could mean that they visited a continent, country, city, neighborhood, street block, a specific address, a building at that address, a floor in the building, a room on a particular floor, or even a space within that room. Place also represents various types of Internet locations, like websites or specific webpages, as well as the devices that connect us with social networking technologies. These virtual places are just as real as physical ones, and so are their relationships to crime. Much of what we are learning about physical places can be, with appropriate modification, applied to virtual places.

Crime studies have conceptualized "place" in a variety of ways. Early studies, such as those conducted by Chicago School researchers, focused mainly on the characteristics of aggregate-level places: communities and neighborhoods (Burgess 1925; Thrasher 1927; Shaw and McKay 1942). These analyses found evidence to support a link between crime and place. These studies challenged the notion that crime is the manifestation of some abnormal internal condition of particular individuals. Rather, evidence suggested that crime is, at least in part, a normal response to unfavorable environmental conditions. These findings inspired the first modern theories of the geography of crime (e.g., social disorganization theory). Research over the next several decades consistently confirmed that some regions, states, cities, and neighborhoods experience higher crime levels than others and that these places possess characteristics that tend to influence levels of criminal activity (e.g., high social mobility, low social and economic status, deteriorating physical conditions).

Today, most researchers agree that place characteristics influence crime. What is left to debate is the *level* at which place most directly influences crime. Many previous studies defined place according to the level of obtainable data (e.g., census blocks or tracts). However, technological advances have increased our analytic capabilities. These advances permit examinations of street- and address-level places. The most comprehensive study of street-level places was undertaken by David Weisburd and colleagues (2004). Their study of 14 years of Seattle's almost 30 thousand street segments showed that crime is highly concentrated at a few segments, and that crime decreases in Seattle are largely due to improvements in some of these high-crime segments. More recently, Braga, Hureau, and Papachristos (2011) found that 8 percent of street segments and intersections produced 66 percent of all street robbery incidents, and about 1 percent of places produced almost 50 percent of commercial robbery incidents between 1980 and 2008 in Boston. This finding held even after controlling for previous robbery levels and trends. Further, places that had the greatest impact on robbery trends also exhibited relatively stable crime trajectories over time.

While empirical studies find strong relationships between crime and place, the precise mechanisms through which places influence crime are often unclear. This confusion is partly attributable to the imprecise nature of the term "place." As noted previously, "place" is used to describe diverse types of locations, including addresses, street segments, and neighborhoods. Using terms like "address," "street," or "neighborhood" to describe places is problematic because they are not grounded in meaningful theoretical constructs. These terms represent levels at which data can be obtained for analysis but fail to explicate the reasons that different types of places facilitate or suppress crime.

We propose three new terms to describe places: "proprietary," "proximal," and "pooled." A proprietary place is an address (physical or virtual), building, or other form of property parcel. The most meaningful distinction between

proprietary and other types of places is that most *proprietary places have distinct owners*. Owners are important because they have legal authority over the functioning of their places. Ownership is tightly linked to place management, and place management directly influences crime—a process this chapter addresses in some depth. Sometimes a proprietary place is defined by a single address (web or street); sometimes it is not (e.g., apartment complexes with individual building addresses, all web pages on craigslist). The boundaries of proprietary places are defined by the spatial limits of the owners' legal authority and responsibility.

Proximal places are small groups of proprietary places clustered relatively close in space (in the physical world and virtual world). These places contain multiple owners, but no owner has full control over the entire proximal place. Spatial immediacy may allow one proprietary place to impact crime at another within a specific proximal place. However, easily measurable units of analysis do not always produce theoretically meaningful clusters. A street block or street segment is a clearly defined cluster of proprietary places, but it may not be very useful for understanding the influence of nearby places on crime. Let's look at a simple example.

Figure 38.1 depicts 11 street blocks (A-K). The bar's physical address is located on street block E. This bar does not offer onsite parking, so customers use the parking lot located on street block I. Crime at the residential proprietary places located along the route between the bar and parking lot may be highly influenced by these facilities, although they are not located on their specific street block. Alternatively, imagine if street block B was divided to create two small cul-de-sacs, blocking pedestrian movement along this path. The bar and parking lot would likely influence crime on these street blocks in very different ways. Bar patrons would no longer travel along the cul-de-sac on the right; thus, fewer people would stumble across crime opportunities within this residential area. On the other hand, we might find heavier crime concentrations within the cul-de-sac closest to the bar if patrons use this as an alternative parking location. Proximal places matter, but (1) the way in which we define them must depend on context, (2) their crime levels are influenced by the proprietary places that they contain, and (3) it is possible that processes at proximal places also account for their crime levels (Weisburd, Groff, and Yang forthcoming).

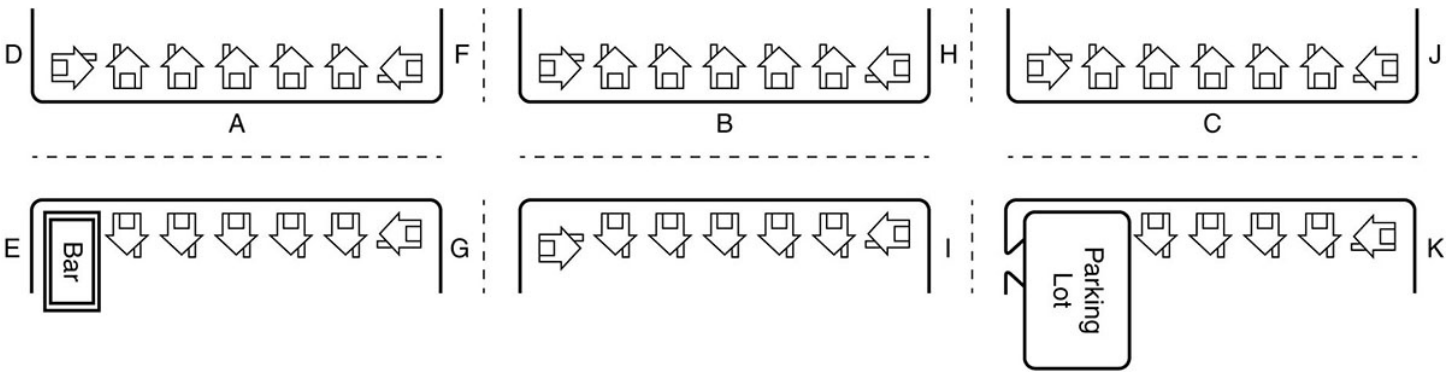


FIGURE 38.1 Proximal and Proprietary Places

Pooled places are higher levels of proprietary place aggregation. The boundaries of such places are usually selected in a highly arbitrary manner. All that can be said about this larger collection of proprietary places is that the places within them share some characteristic that may or may not be relevant for understanding crime within these areas (e.g., they are all located within the same city, neighborhood, housing tract, or census block). Crime and place studies using pooled places as units of analysis must describe the mechanisms that influence crime in these collective places to give meaning to these aggregations and their boundaries….

Why Proprietary Places Matter

Every urban city suffers from “historical” or “durable” crime hot spots. High-crime places within cities are commonly used to inform hot spot models. It has been suggested that using such models to develop place-based interventions offers a more efficient method of reducing crime than individual-focused interventions due to the stability of crime-place characteristics (Weisburd 1997; Kennedy, Caplan, and Piza 2010). Proprietary place-based rather than offender-based interventions may also be more effective because crime concentrations are higher among particular places than among repeat offenders (Spelman and Eck 1989). Additionally, we always know where to find these places, in contrast to victims and offenders; we know more about where a crime occurred (from police and other government databases); and someone is legally responsible for the place, namely, the owner.

Crime levels across places tend to be stable partly because the conditions necessary to facilitate high-crime locations are rare. Perhaps these places are less rare than we wish them to be, but research confirms that low-crime places are substantially more common. Places matter precisely because crime is so highly concentrated at a small number of them. Crime distributions across places follow what is commonly referred to as the 80–20 rule, which predicts that most of the outcomes are produced by a few things (Koch 1999). While the precise percentages may vary, the general rule is that a few things (e.g., places, offenders, targets) are disproportionately involved in generating crime incidents. Eck, Clarke, and Guerette (2007) note that this type of distribution is ubiquitous with crime places, is very common when dealing with crime phenomena, and is seen in a wide variety of social, biological, and physical phenomena.

High-crime places greatly influence overall crime rates. We have already mentioned findings from Seattle (Weisburd et al. 2004) and Boston (Braga, Hureau, and Papachristos 2011) showing such results at the proximal place level. Crime concentrations at proprietary places within proximal places also significantly impact overall crime rates. For example, Sherman, Gartin, and Buerger (1989) found that 50 percent of calls for police service in Minneapolis came from only 3 percent of the city’s addresses. The observed crime concentration among addresses was even more pronounced when broken down by crime type (e.g., all robberies occurred at only 2.2 percent of all addresses)....

How Managers Influence Crime at Places

Routine activity theory was developed by Cohen and Felson (1979) in an attempt to explain the rising crime rate in the United States during a period of improving social and economic conditions. They hypothesized that more criminal opportunities were created as a result of these improved conditions. More motivated offenders were encountering unguarded suitable targets as they conducted their daily routine activities (e.g., greater female participation in universities and the workplace left homes vulnerable to burglary). The importance of place is implied to some degree in this early model since victims and offenders must meet in time and space in order for a crime to occur (Cohen and Felson 1979; Felson 1986). However, an explicit discussion of the relationship between crime and place was not proposed until Eck's (1994) study of drug-dealing places. A systematic comparison of proprietary places, on the same block, used and not used for drug dealing, revealed that drug dealers were selecting proprietary places based on their characteristics. Of particular interest was the size of the apartment building—smaller being preferable. Eck conjectured that owners of smaller buildings exerted less control over their proprietary places than owners of larger buildings. Later, in a randomized controlled study, he demonstrated that intervening with apartment owners created large significant crime reduction effects at drug places (Eck and Wartell 1998), thus confirming the hypothesis.

Eck (1994) developed the "place manager" concept to describe individuals who are responsible for monitoring and controlling behavior at specific places. This term was also created to distinguish people who control proprietary places from other types of crime controllers, such as guardians and handlers. Guardians and handlers can prevent crime by protecting targets and controlling offenders, respectively, but they do not control places ([see Table 38.1], see also Felson 1995; Clarke and Eck 2005). The current model of routine activities theory can be conceptualized as the double-layered triangle, also known as the "crime triangle," depicted in Figure 38.2 (Eck 1994, 2003). In order for any crime to occur, all "elements" of the inner layer must be simultaneously present at a time when all "controllers" in the outer layer are weak or absent. Since only one effective controller is enough to prevent a crime event, it is easy to see why place managers play a critical role in preventing crime at places.

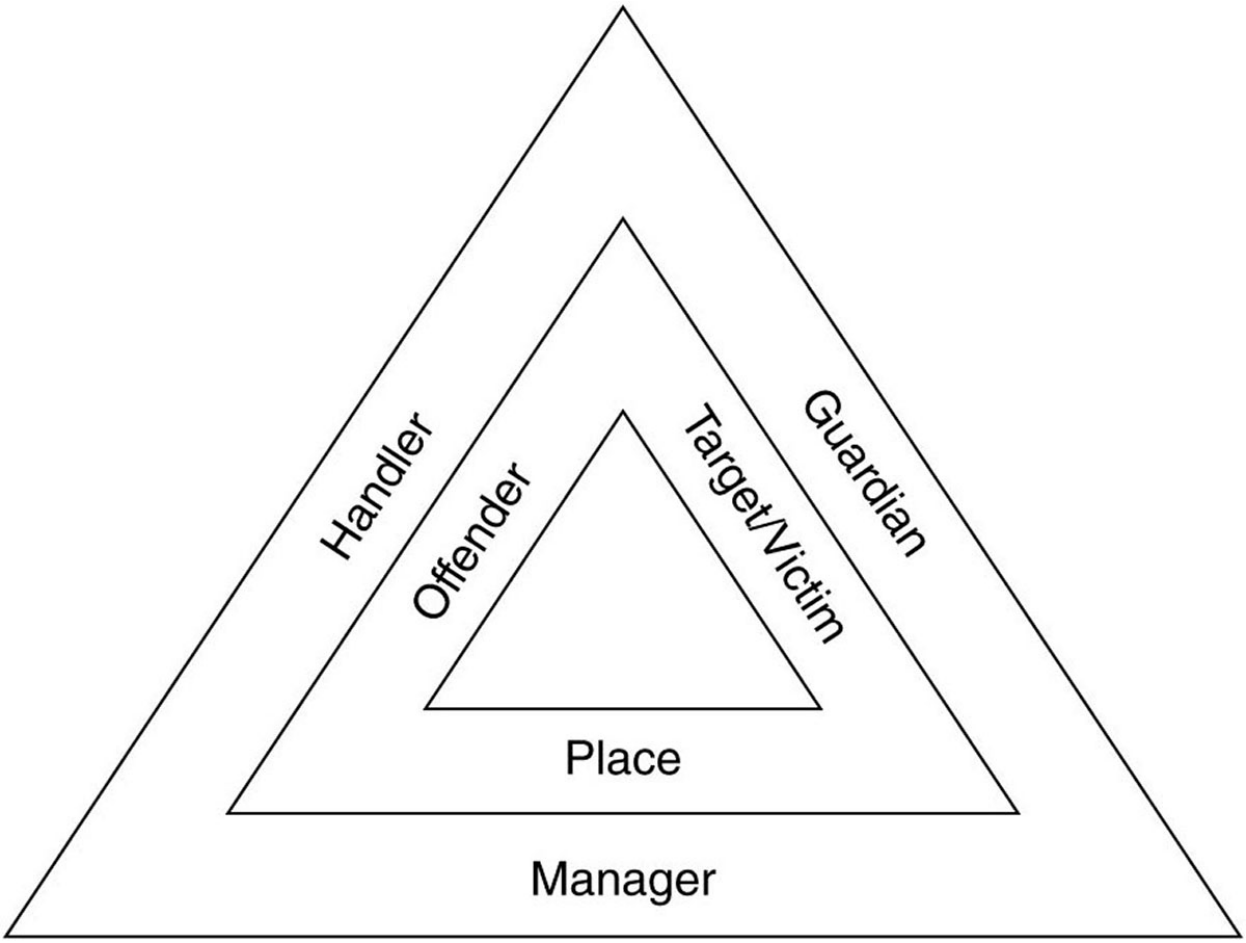


FIGURE 38.2 The Crime Triangle

TABLE 38.1. How Place Managers Differ From Other Controllers

	Manager	Guardian	Handler
Definition	The owner of a place or the representative of the owner	A person who protects another person or thing from theft, attack, or damage	A person emotionally connected to a potential offender and who keeps that person out of trouble
Examples	Bar owner, life guard, airline attendant, janitor	Security guard, friend, neighbor	Parent, coach, sibling
Interest	The functioning of the place	Protecting the target (person or thing)	Keep offender from committing crime

This extension of routine activities theory has helped draw attention to the link between proprietary places, place management, and crime. Note that place management applies only to proximal places when an owner possesses all the property on the street segment (e.g., a street through a large apartment complex containing multiple buildings), and it never applies to pooled places. Subsequent research and proposed theoretical processes have further specified various categories of place managers, as well as their functions and the mechanisms through which they control crime at places.

Levels of Place Management

Felson (1995) has identified four levels of place managers: personal, assigned, diffuse, and general. Place managers with "personal" responsibility are the owners of properties. These individuals, businesses, or government agencies are ultimately responsible for the activities that occur at their proprietary places. They have the greatest degree of control over what does and what does not occur at places. Importantly, they have legal authority and property rights to the place that give them powers no one else has. Place managers with "assigned" responsibility are employees specifically tasked with regulating behavior at a location. Personal managers delegate some of their powers to assigned managers. Security guards and loss prevention staff represent this type of manager. Place managers with "diffuse" responsibility are other employees who work at a proprietary place. They too gain their authority through delegation, but they differ from assigned managers in their work assignments, which typically do not include controlling the behaviors of others. A stock-room worker, maintenance staff, and housekeeping personnel can act as diffuse managers. Place managers with "general" responsibility are customers, by-standers, or other citizens who visit places during the course of their routine activities. They have no delegated authority to act, and are not expected to act, but may do so voluntarily [see Table 38.2].

TABLE 38.2 Levels of Place Management at Two Different Facility Types

Manager [1]	Bar	Apartment
Personal *Owners, Family, Friends*	Bar owner hires bouncer and requires bartenders to attend "server training"	Landlord installs fencing, lighting, and security cameras, and hires a security patrol and maintenance firm
Assigned *Employees with specific assignments*	Bouncer ejects fighting patrons and bans them from reentry	Security patrol breaks up a loud party and reports incident to the owner
Diffuse *Employees with general assignment*	Server stops providing alcohol to overly intoxicated patrons	Maintenance worker discovers break in the fence where thieves could enter property
General *Strangers, other citizens*	Bar musician calms two drunken patrons having a dispute over a woman	Renter stops kids from vandalizing the community center and pool

Source: Adapted from Felson (1995).

Crime can be discouraged by all of these managers. A stockroom worker could stop another employee from pilfering merchandise. A customer may stop another customer from shoplifting.... However, personal place managers have greater power and interest in controlling behaviors at their places than the others. It is useful to consider the ways in which their management decisions impact crime. Recent theoretical developments have described the ways in which managers create or block crime opportunities and outlined the specific processes of place management.

Place Management Activities in High-Crime Places

Place managers influence crime at proprietary places through their authority to control their properties. A place manager can create a crime hot spot in three ways. Managers create crime opportunities by failing to protect vulnerable targets, attracting potential offenders, or failing to effectively control people's behavior (Brantingham and Brantingham 1995; Clarke and Eck 2005). Let us look at each of these management failures and how they create different types of high-crime places.

First, place managers may facilitate crime by creating a "crime generator." Crime generators are locations that offer a large number of attractive targets or bring large numbers of people together. For example, large shopping malls offer desirable merchandise, attract large numbers of customers, and subsequently increase opportunities for offenders and targets to come together in time and space. These types of proprietary places require manager intervention to reduce crime opportunities and prevent the location from becoming a crime hot spot (e.g., patrol parking lots, use closed circuit television cameras, install electronic article surveillance tags on merchandise).

Second, managers may design proprietary places that function as "crime attractors." The characteristics of these places attract a disproportionate number of offenders to the location. Nightclubs that permit drug use, unsecured apartment buildings, and convenience stores that facilitate open-air drug markets often attract motivated offenders. These locations will likely suffer from high levels of crime simply based on the type of clientele or user that management attracts.

Third, managers can create proprietary places that function as "crime enablers." Managers in these places fail to set appropriate behavioral expectations, enforce rules of conduct, or provide guardians or handlers to prevent misconduct. Crime incidents are more likely to occur in these places due to lax regulation of conduct. Examples of crime enabler locations include school hallways where unsupervised children bully others, college fraternity or sorority houses, and sports stadiums that fail to regulate alcohol sales.

It is important to consider that the primary focus of most place managers is not crime control. School principals aim to provide high-quality education, bar and apartment owners want to increase profit margins, and shopping mall owners attempt to increase the number of customers who visit their leased storefronts. Most everyday activities of place managers may seem unrelated to crime prevention. However, locations that function as crime generators, attractors, and enablers are formed as a direct result of place management processes.

The Process of Place Management

Place management is a set of four processes that owners, their employees, and others use to organize a location's physical and social environment (Madensen 2007). These processes are the following:

1. Organize space—the organization and design of the space or location, including location selection, construction, repair, and upkeep.
2. Regulate conduct—the promotion and prohibition of activities, including activities that are sought after and those that are undesirable.
3. Control access—the inclusion and exclusion of individuals or groups of people.
4. Acquire resources—the acquisition of money and other resources that can be used to carry out processes 1 through 3, as well as to generate profit.

These four processes (ORCA) can be used separately or in combination so that everyday place functions can be carried out. Theory and research demonstrate that decisions made as a function of carrying out these processes often directly or indirectly influence crime at places. Because personal place managers have legal authority over their spaces, almost any form of crime prevention at their place must be approved by them. Thus situational crime prevention (Clarke 1983), crime prevention through environmental design (Crowe 2000), and defensible space (Newman 1973) can only be enacted at places with the cooperation of place managers. They are the linchpin of most crime prevention at places.

How Management Decisions Create or Suppress Crime Opportunities

Research has shown that the characteristics of places, both social and physical, most strongly influence offender perceptions of crime opportunities (Clarke 1983, 1997; Miethe and Meier 1994; Sacco and Kennedy 1998). These place characteristics are a direct consequence of manager decision making. As argued previously, decisions are made to carry out one or more of four place management processes. Crime can be an unintended side effect of these decisions.

Table 38.3 provides examples of manager decisions related to each of the four processes. In addition, the table provides examples of how the outcomes of these choices might manifest themselves in both physical and virtual environments. Specifically, the outcomes of decisions related to picking a business theme, establishing a conduct code, forgoing access restrictions, and charging for services are presented for both types of environments. We can anticipate how these decisions may create or suppress crime opportunities.

TABLE 38.3 Place Manager Decisions

	Organize Space	Regulate Conduct	Control Access	Acquire Resources
Manager Decision	Pick a business theme	Establish conduct code	No restrictions or entrance fees	Charge for services
Physical Manifestation	Biker bar	Signs posted at entrance	No age restrictions	Sell alcohol
Virtual Manifestation	Motorcycle enthusiast site	Site agreement before entering	Open, unsecured site	Sell memberships for more services

For example, biker-themed businesses will tend to attract bikers, some of whom may be involved in criminal biker organizations. This decision may create a “crime attractor” location. The decision to establish a code of conduct may have a crime suppression effect. Rule setting can reduce the likelihood that the place will become a “crime enabler,” assuming that the rules are enforced. However, failing to establish any type of access control could prove problematic. For example, failure to exclude young persons from the bar means that they will be exposed to older adult strangers and have greater opportunity to gain access to alcohol, both of which could increase their likelihood of victimization. Also, the decision to run an open and unsecure website could expose users to higher risks of identity theft, particularly those who use their credit cards to purchase memberships on the site. These decisions related to access control may produce “crime generator” places.

This theoretical exercise illustrates the impact of place manager decision making on crime. It is important to note that these decisions are made as a function of creating and maintaining a business; the criminal implications are often a secondary concern. However, these decisions can dramatically alter the opportunity structure for crime at proprietary places. The outcomes of these choices can increase or decrease the attractiveness of criminal behavior at a given location, thus impacting crime levels within proximal and pooled places. Following the basic tenets of situational crime prevention, we should expect management decisions that directly or indirectly increase effort and risk, decrease rewards and provocations, or remove excuses associated with criminal behavior to have a crime suppression effect (Cornish and Clarke 2003)....

New Directions for Place-Crime Theory

The proprietary places we have discussed have all been crime sites. Do proprietary places have other roles in crime—roles that do not necessarily involve being locations of crime? Recent advances in place theory suggest that there are other types of proprietary places that need to be examined. Further, all of these places may have a virtual equivalent. Table 38.4 provides an outline of a classification of places: physical and virtual. We have discussed physical crime sites at great length. An example of a virtual crime site is a pornography website that routinely steals personal identification information from visitors or infects their computers with viruses.

TABLE 38.4 CS_4– Variety of Crime-Involved Proprietary Places

	Physical Description	Example	Virtual version
Crime Sites	An address, building, or land parcel with a great deal of crime	A high-crime convenience store	A website that routinely corrupts computers that link to it
Convergent Settings	A place where potential offenders routinely meet	A transit hub	A website where offenders can exchange information
Comfort Spaces	A place offenders use as a safe house, stash site, or for private meetings	An offender rents an apartment and uses it as a club house for other members of his group	A protected private website only particular offenders can access
Corrupt Spots	A place that promotes crime at other places	A metal recycling business	A server that controls illicit activity at other websites

Marcus Felson (2003) identified another type of place: convergent settings. Convergent settings bring people together. The importance for crime is that these settings could be locations where offenders meet. Felson suggests that such places are useful for recruiting members to gangs. Websites and chat rooms can serve similar purposes on the Internet.

The idea for comfort space comes from Sergeant Matthew Hammer of the Cincinnati Police Department. He suggests that offenders often use specific locations as social hangouts, as hiding places to stash drugs and weapons, and as private party locations. Offenders seek to keep these locations hidden from police so they avoid criminal activities at these locations, but they situate them near areas where they commit crimes. Osama bin Laden's safehouse in Abbottabad, Pakistan, is a dramatic example of a comfort space (Hammer 2011). Password-protected websites can serve similar purposes.

Finally, consider corrupt spots. These places directly foster crime at other places. A metal recycling business can serve as such a proprietary place if it encourages offenders to break into buildings to steal copper piping and other metals. As is the case with comfort space, offenders at corrupt spots prefer to keep them hidden from police, so these will not show up as crime places on crime maps. A website that offers cash to hackers for credit card data stolen from other sites is an example of a virtual corrupt spot….

It is time criminologists look more carefully at who owns what and how owners manage their places. Research in the last two decades has demonstrated that there are many lessons to be learned from following this path. Understanding how place managers respond to crime, where we should expect place management to matter, what

types of management activities matter more than others, what factors influence place management decisions, how place managers are networked, and how best to encourage change in place management practices are topics that need considerable research. Almost all prevention policies at the place level must take into account the interests of place managers, including all prevention efforts designed to change the physical setting and many that alter the social setting. The first three activities in ORCA focus on these settings. A focus on place management means there are many more opportunities to prevent crime at places than simple reliance on police patrols. Regulatory actions have received only the most basic examination by researchers, and there is a host of regulatory policies that have not been attempted, let alone evaluated. In short, place ownership matters, and theorizing and studying crime places have great practical and academic potential.

Appendix A—Glossary of Crime-Place Terms and Concepts

Place research and theory has expanded over the last 20 years. In the process, concepts that were once clear have become ambiguous. This glossary serves the purpose of providing some relatively specific definitions to improve the clarity of future research and theory.

Facility—a member of a homogeneous set of proprietary places. A facility may be located adjacent to others in its set, but typically members of the set are dispersed within pooled places.

Place management—the activities of a proprietary place manager. The four types of activities, collectively referred to as ORCA, are these:

1. *Organizing space*—including site location, construction, renovation, and interior design;
2. *Regulating conduct*—including creating and enforcing rules, promoting particular activities, and discouraging other activities;
3. *Controlling access*—including enticing preferred place users, discouraging other users, and advertising; and
4. *Acquiring resources*—including generating revenue (businesses), finding donors (nongovernmental organizations), or obtaining a budget allocation (governmental agencies).

Place manager—the owner of a proprietary place, the owner's employees, and occasionally volunteers or others. Place managers have legal authority over the place. Their interest is principally in the functioning of their place. Though they may provide guardianship, this is only one of many instruments they use (see *place management*). Unlike guardians, place managers may not be concerned about crime if it does not impede place functioning. Following Felson (1995), place managers maybe personal, assigned, diffuse, or general, though their powers typically decline from personal to general.

Pooled place—a contiguous cluster of proximal places comprising a community, neighborhood, police beat or district, or another large spatial aggregation. These places are the domain of social disorganization and other aggregate-level place theories. Crime-facilitating place management practices at one proprietary place are unlikely to affect a large number of proprietary places within the pooled place, although they could substantially influence the overall crime level of the pooled place.

Proprietary place—a place defined by ownership boundaries. Proprietary places have specific functions. All proprietary place functions are defined by the place's owner. Place management applies here. Place management, or the ORCA processes, are used to preserve and extend the function of the place. There are four ways in which proprietary places can be involved in crime. They may serve as crime sites, convergent settings, comfort spaces, or corrupt spots. These are defined in Table 38.4

Proximal place—a small collection of proprietary places that influence each other through close spatial proximity. These are often defined in research as street segments—linear aggregations of contiguous proprietary places. Consequently, proximal places contain multiple owners or place managers with individual interests and management practices. The proximal place may be comprised of a homogeneous set of proprietary places (e.g., all restaurants or all single-family detached homes) or contain a diverse set of proprietary places (shops, residents, bars,

and parking interspersed along a street or adjacent street segments). Crime-facilitating place management practices at one proprietary place can potentially impact crime at others within the proximal place.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the three types of controllers that can prevent crime according to the crime triangle? Provide an example of each type of controller.
2. What are the four levels of place management, starting with the "personal" level? Provide an example of each level of management using a specific facility type, such as a bar or apartment.
3. What are the four types of place management decisions represented by Madensen and Eck's ORCA model? Provide an example of each decision in relation to a manager of a particular facility type, such as a bar or apartment, and explain how each decision might impact crime at a facility location.
4. Besides crime sites, what are three additional crime-involved proprietary places? Explain how each of the three might play a role in cybercrime.

39.
Multilevel Criminal Opportunity*

Pamela Wilcox

Brooke Miller Gialopsos

Kenneth C. Land

Environmental criminology consists of several overlapping yet distinct theories, including those covered in Part XI —routine activities theory, crime pattern and target search theories, and defensible space theory (also referred to as environmental design theory). All of the theories are united in their emphasis on the importance of "criminal opportunity" in understanding the nonrandom patterning of crime events, and they highlight various social and physical aspects of the environment that influence opportunity. These perspectives assume that offenders make conscious decisions about their crime events. As such, the rational choice perspective (see Part X, Chapter 33) is also often considered as part of environmental criminology. Although the various theories under the umbrella of "environmental criminology" (including rational choice) are overlapping conceptually, they were developed independent of one another and have traditionally been studied separately. However, that trend has been changing with the development of integrative theoretical approaches in criminology more broadly (see Part XIV) and within environmental criminology specifically.

Wilcox et al. (2013) provide an example of integrated theory in environmental criminology with their multilevel criminal opportunity perspective (see Wilcox et al., 2003, for the original statement of the theory; see also Tillyer, 2010, 2015, for reviews). Multilevel criminal opportunity theory (MCOT) posits that opportunity is affected by a multitude of factors expressed in environmental criminology theories (including rational choice) as well as social control theories. Thus, factors such as lifestyles and routine activities, environmental design, and formal and informal social control are all presumed to affect criminal opportunity. Furthermore, MCOT states that opportunity is affected by these various factors at multiple levels of analysis (Wilcox et al., 2003, 2013). For example, MCOT recognizes that opportunity is affected by characteristics of individuals, places, streets (or street blocks), neighborhoods, and so on. Overall, then, the integrative (or "general") multilevel opportunity theory described by Wilcox et al. (2013: 584) recognizes criminal opportunity as having multiple conceptual components and multiple spatial dimensions (see Table 39.1).

TABLE 39.1 Applicability of Opportunity Theories to Crime Patterns at Various Levels of Analysis

Level of Analysis	Observed Crime Pattern	Lifestyle-Routine Activities Theory	Environmental Design Theory	Rational Choice Theory	Offender Search Theory	Social Control Theories
Individual	Differential victimization risk; repeat victimization	Individuals who experience victimization are (1) more exposed to	Individuals who experience victimization are (1) more frequently in	Offenders perceive certain individuals as providing relatively low	Individuals who experience victimization are traveling within the	Individuals with weak ties to formal agents of control or weak social ties are

Level of Analysis	Observed Crime Pattern	Lifestyle-Routine Activities Theory	Environmental Design Theory	Rational Choice Theory	Offender Search Theory	Social Control Theories
		motivated offenders, (2) more suitable targets, and/or (3) less effectively guarded.	accessible space, (2) more frequently in high-density, public space with little private ownership, (3) provided little surveillance, and/or (4) more frequently in physically disordered space.	risk and high reward, thus targeting these individuals as victims.	activity spaces of offenders, especially at nodes, along paths, or at the edges of nodes or paths.	relatively unguarded and thus vulnerable to victimization.
Place	Hot spots	Places where crime occurs (especially repeatedly) (1) host a high concentration of motivated offenders, (2) host a high concentration of suitable targets, and/or (3) provide ineffective guardianship (to the place itself, or to the potential offenders or victims within the place).	Places with high crime (1) are easily accessible, (2) are high-density, public land uses with little sense of private ownership conveyed, (3) provide limited natural surveillance, and/or (4) have physical disorder.	Places with high crime are perceived by offenders as low-risk and high-reward settings for crime.	Places with high crime are often nodes (or the edges of nodes) within offenders' activity/search spaces.	Places with weak place-level control—or "place management"—are likely to host more crime.
Street	Hot blocks; crime clusters on streets	Streets with high rates of crime have (1) a high concentration of motivated offenders or are spatially proximal to streets/areas with such concentration, (2) a high concentration of suitable targets, and/or (3) ineffective guardianship.	Streets with high rates of crime (1) are easily accessible, (2) provide high-density, public land uses with little evidence of private ownership, (3) offer minimal natural surveillance, and/or (4) exhibit physical disorder.	Streets with high rates of crime are perceived by offenders as low-risk and high-reward settings for crime.	Streets with high rates of crime are either major paths (i.e., streets connecting nodes) or are along the edges of major paths (i.e., streets bordering major paths) within offenders' activity/search spaces.	Streets with high rates of crime have weak formal control and/or weak systems of informal social control among residents and users, thus providing minimal supervision and/or intervention on the streets.
Neighborhood/Area	"Zones" of crime	Neighborhoods or areas with high rates of crime have (1) high concentrations of motivated offenders or are spatially proximal to	Neighborhoods or areas with high rates of crime (1) are easily accessible, (2) provide high-density, public land uses with little evidence of private ownership,	Neighborhoods or areas with high crime are perceived by offenders as low-risk and high-reward settings for crime.	Neighborhoods or areas with high rates of crime (1) are proximal to offenders' residences, (2) are accessible via major paths, and/or (3)	Neighborhoods or areas with high crime rates have weak formal control and/or weak systems of informal social control among residents and

Level of Analysis	Observed Crime Pattern	Lifestyle-Routine Activities Theory	Environmental Design Theory	Rational Choice Theory	Offender Search Theory	Social Control Theories
		areas with such concentration, (2) high concentrations of suitable targets, and/or (3) less effective guardianship.	(3) offer minimal natural surveillance, and/or (4) exhibit physical disorder.		contain crime-generating nodes.	users, thus providing minimal supervision and/or intervention within the area.

Note: Adapted from Eck et al. (2005).

MCOT posits that indicators of criminal opportunity at various levels of analysis might operate independently but also suggests that the interaction between micro and macro levels of analysis is likely. More specifically, individual-level or place-level characteristics might affect opportunity for crime or victimization differently, depending on characteristics of the larger environmental context(s) in which the individuals or places are situated (such as neighborhoods). The "opportunity context" characterizing macro-level environments can serve to accentuate or attenuate the opportunity-related characteristics of individuals and places. For example, a street corner at the intersection of two busy streets with near access to a highway seemingly offers a place-level opportunity for drug dealing. However, the larger context in which the street corner is situated matters as well and can alter the extent to which the corner is an opportunistic drug-dealing location. This street corner offers particularly strong criminal opportunity if it is located in a neighborhood with a significant drug-addicted population and where residents tend to look the other way. In comparison, a similar corner in a neighborhood with few addicts and strong informal social control offers much less opportunity.

There is considerable empirical evidence in support of the tenets of MCOT. Studies of offender decision making and crime events indicate that "offenders engage in a hierarchical decision-making process that is compatible with the notion of opportunity at multiple levels" (Wilcox et al., 2013: 586). In other words, when offenders search for targets, they consider cues regarding criminal opportunity at multiple levels of analysis. Additionally, there are now a number of quantitative, multilevel studies indicating that individual- or place-level crime or victimization events are affected by the interaction between individual- and neighborhood-level indicators of opportunity (Deryol et al., 2016; Miethe and McDowall, 1993; Tillyer et al., 1; Wilcox et al., 2007).

References

Deryol, Rustu, Pamela Wilcox, Matthew Logan, and John Wooldredge. 2016. "Crime Places in Context: An Illustration of the Multilevel Nature of Hotspot Development." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **32**: 305–325.

Miethe, Terance D. and David McDowall. 1993. "Contextual Effects in Models of Criminal Victimization." *Social Forces* **71**: 741–759

Tillyer, Marie Skubak. 2010. "Wilcox, Pamela, Kenneth C. Land, and Scott A. Hunt: Multicontextual Opportunity Theory." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*, pp. 1008–1011. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

____. 2015. "General Multilevel Opportunity and Crime Events." *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* **31**: 107–121.

Tillyer, Marie Skubak, Pamela Wilcox, and Rebecca J. Walter. 2021. "Crime Generators in Context: Examining 'Place in Neighborhood' Propositions." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **37**: 517–546.

Wilcox, Pamela, Brooke Miller Gialopsos, and Kenneth C. Land. 2013. “Multilevel Criminal Opportunity.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 579–601. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wilcox, Pamela, Kenneth C. Land, and Scott A. Hunt. 2003. *Criminal Circumstance: A Dynamic Multicontextual Criminal Opportunity Theory*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Wilcox, Pamela, Tamara D. Madensen, and Marie Skubak Tillyer. 2007. “Guardianship in Context: Implications for Burglary Risk and Prevention.” *Criminology* **45**: 771–804.

The vast majority of criminologists explore the reasons that some people—whether as individuals or as groups located in a particular ecological context—are more likely to break the law than others. This likelihood or propensity to break the law is typically called *criminality*. It is assumed that where criminality is stronger, crime will be higher. A growing number of scholars, however, have questioned as incomplete this way of explaining crime. They note that for a *criminal event* to take place, offenders must have more than criminality or the willingness to break the law. They must also have *opportunity* to act on their desires. Thus, the distribution of crime across individuals and environmental spaces is going to be determined not only by *criminality* but also by *criminal opportunity*.

The importance of criminal opportunity has been addressed by various compatible theories, most introduced in piecemeal fashion in the 1970s and 1980s, with each still being extended and refined today. The theories addressing criminal opportunity include lifestyle-routine activities, environmental design, rational choice, offender search, and social control theories. These various perspectives … are somewhat disparate in terms of origin and key concepts. However, they are united in their overarching premise that offenders make decisions about crime events on the basis of perceived opportunity. These theories, which we collectively refer to as “opportunity theories,” were often originally viewed as outside the mainstream of criminology. However, they have gained steady traction over the past three to four decades, and they are poised to play a major role in future thinking about both the causes of crime and the prevention thereof (Cullen 2011)….

---

* Wilcox, Pamela, Brooke Miller Gialopsos, and Kenneth C. Land. 2013. “Multilevel Criminal Opportunity.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 579–601. New York: Oxford University Press.

Theories of Criminal Opportunity

The opportunity theories that comprise a general multilevel opportunity perspective presuppose that offenders make conscious decisions, albeit sometimes severely constrained, about their crime events. Offender decision-making that is rooted in perceived opportunity results in, among other things, discernible crime event patterns. For instance, crime events are distributed nonrandomly—or, experienced differentially—across individuals (as victims), places, streets, neighborhoods, and even larger macro-spatial areas, including cities, regions, or nations (Taylor 1998; Eck et al. 2005). Such spatial patterns are, again, presumed to be related to variation in opportunities across these various levels of analysis. In other words, certain individuals, places, streets, and neighborhoods provide significantly more opportunity than do others. Consequently, they tend to experience more crime.

A full review of all of the theories that can account for variation in opportunity is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, Table 39.1 summarizes the various perspectives, showing how they are used to account for crime patterns observed at four different levels of analysis—individual, place, street, and neighborhood/area. These influences can be enumerated as follows:

1. Lifestyle-routine activities theory stresses daily routines as providing more or less opportunity by affecting the degree of exposure between offenders and potential victims, the suitability or attractiveness of targets, and the level of available, effective guardianship (e.g., Hindelang, Gottfredson, and Garofalo 1978; Cohen and Felson 1979; Cohen, Felson, and Land 1980; Cohen, Kluegel, and Land 1981).
2. Environmental design theory emphasizes how features of the physical environment make crime either easier or more difficult. More specifically, design features such as street type and layout, land use/zoning, site design, and physical incivilities affect opportunity by impacting accessibility, density and/or public nature of use, surveillance potential, and image (e.g., Newman 1972, 1996; Wilson and Kelling 1982; Taylor and Harrell 1996).
3. Rational choice theory emphasizes opportunity as occurring in situations where a crime can be committed with little effort or risk of detection, yet yield substantial reward for the offender (e.g., Clarke 1980; Clarke and Cornish 1985). Effort is assumed to be affected by things such as the accessibility of targets/victims and the accessibility of tools or weapons that might be necessary for a crime. Risk of apprehension is presumed to be a function of guardianship and surveillance. Reward is associated with the value and marketability of targets/victims as well as the gratification they provide.
4. Overlapping with lifestyle-routine activities theory, offender search theory proposes that opportunity occurs at the intersection of offenders' and victims' daily movements. The theory posits that offenders will find opportunity within the geographic space that they use on a regular basis (i.e., their "activity space"). More specifically, opportunity is thought to be especially plentiful near "nodes" (i.e., major activity centers) and along major "paths" (i.e., heavily traveled routes) within offender activity space. Offenders are also thought to find abundant opportunity at the edges of their activity space (Brantingham and Brantingham 1981, 1993, 1995).

Finally, social control theories emphasize that opportunity is present when there is minimal chance for formal (i.e., police) or informal (i.e., neighbor) supervision and/or intervention (e.g., Felson 1986, 1995; Osgood et al. 1996). When controls are weak, there is scant likelihood that offenders will be handled, potential victims guarded, or places effectively managed.

General Multilevel Opportunity Theory: Theoretical Propositions

Although there is clearly overlap among the theories summarized in Table 39.1, scholars most often study criminal opportunity through the lens of a single opportunity theory. Hence, criminal opportunity is typically discussed using a single set of concepts. However, a single-theory approach is limiting. Taken together, the various theories summarized in Table 39.1 allow for a richer understanding of the multiple sources of criminal offender choices regarding opportunity than does any single theory. Therefore, we need an integrated general theory rather than a set of independent single theories of criminal opportunity. Additionally, although opportunity is often studied at a single level of analysis, implicit in all opportunity theories is that opportunity exists at *multiple levels* (see, e.g., Taylor and Gottfredson 1986; Taylor 1998; Eck et al. 2005). Therefore, for an opportunity theory to be truly general, it also must take into account the varied sources of opportunity at multiple levels of analysis.

These issues lead to the following core insight: a general multilevel opportunity theory is needed that reveals *the multiple conceptual components* and *multiple spatial dimensions* of opportunity (Wilcox, Land, and Hunt 2003). Accordingly, a general multilevel opportunity theory recognizes that opportunity stems from a multitude of sources. Additionally, it is explicit in its recognition that opportunity exists at many different levels of analysis, including individuals, places, streets, neighborhoods, and the like. These various levels represent unique types of behavior settings with distinct structures of opportunity. The various levels and their respective opportunity structures—independently or in interaction with one another—can affect the active, albeit bounded, decisions of offenders. As a result, multilevel opportunity helps create spatial patterning of crime at various levels of social life.

Drawing upon previous theoretical statements (Wilcox, Land, and Hunt 2003), general multilevel opportunity theory can be summarized in propositional form. Specifically, four propositions are discussed in this chapter:

1. *Opportunity determines the distribution of crime events*.

Variation in opportunity, not criminality, is most useful for understanding the concentration of crime events among certain individuals (as victims), at particular places, on certain streets, and in specific neighborhoods or areas.

2. *Opportunity comes from a variety of sources, reflected in the different opportunity theories mentioned earlier*.

As summarized in Table 39.1, opportunity is shaped by, among other things, the routine activities and lifestyles of victims, offenders, and potential guardians; the design and condition of the physical environment; and levels of formal and informal social control. Consideration of only a single opportunity theory may, in fact, lead to an incomplete understanding of criminal opportunity and misspecification of the likelihood for crime events across individuals/places/streets/neighborhoods.

3. *Opportunity for crime is multilevel*.

As shown in Table 39.1, criminal opportunity exists at *various levels of social life*, including individuals, places, streets, neighborhoods, and even larger areas. Thus, individuals (as potential victims) and places can be characterized in terms of the opportunity they provide. However, individuals and places are located within spatial contexts that also can be characterized as having a certain level of opportunity. Hence, a multilevel conceptualization

of opportunity is necessary to more accurately assess the likelihood of crime/victimization events across people and places. Considering opportunity at the individual or place level only will likely result in an analysis that misspecifies the effects of opportunity and the associated risk for experiencing crime events.

4. *Opportunity at various levels can operate independently or interactively*.

A good deal of the empirical research addressing multilevel opportunity (reviewed in the next section) has addressed only the possibility of simultaneous, independent effects of opportunity at multiple levels of analysis. As an example, the effects of some individual-level indicators of opportunity might be constant across all contexts—the effects of these indicators are thus not context-dependent. If the effects of indicators of opportunity at various levels of analysis are *independent*, then they work together in an additive fashion in determining overall opportunity for crime events. Thus, opportunity characterizing one unit of analysis (say, individuals or places) might be reinforced or, conversely, canceled by the opportunity (or lack thereof) presented by other units (say, streets or neighborhoods).

Alternatively, other scholarship has recognized that criminal opportunity at multiple levels of analysis does not always work in an additive fashion. Rather, opportunity is sometimes best viewed as something that emerges from the *interactions* between characteristics at individual and contextual levels. In other words, factors indicative of individual- or place-level opportunity might not lead to crime events in the same manner across different broader environmental contexts. As an example, walking alone at night might provide more criminal opportunity when done in the context of an inner-city neighborhood with an active open-air drug market than walking alone at night in an affluent neighborhood that is purely residential. When interactive influences are present, the extent to which individual- or place-level factors provide opportunity differs depending upon the opportunity structures of contexts in which individuals and/or places are situated.

There have been few attempts to put forth specific hypotheses and/or explanations about the precise ways in which individual-environment or place-environment interactions work (see Miethe and McDowall 1993; Miethe and Meier 1994; Wilcox, Land, and Hunt 2003). And given the tremendous number of potential interaction effects—due to the varied sources of opportunity and the multiple levels of analysis involved—an exhaustive list of specific hypotheses might be impossible to provide. At minimum, such a list would not be parsimonious. In general, however, limited theoretical and empirical work on such interactions points to several general principles:

- Individual- or place-level characteristics that would increase opportunity for crime (e.g., an individual walks alone at night, or a bar serves alcohol to intoxicated clients) are especially likely to be associated with crime events in opportunistic contexts. In other words, the effects of individual- or place-level crime-event *risk factors* are greater in *high-opportunity* contexts than in low-opportunity contexts.
- Individual- or place-level characteristics that attempt to decrease opportunity for crime (e.g., an individual carries a whistle, or a bar hires a “bouncer”) matter less in opportunistic contexts. In other words, the effects of individual- or place-level crime-event *protective factors* are greater in *low-opportunity* contexts than in high-opportunity contexts….

Implications

To summarize the preceding sections, various opportunity theories have been put forth in the last 30 years. These theories suggest that crime is patterned at various levels of social life because of variation in criminal opportunity. The theories suggest that lifestyle-routine activities, environmental design, and social control—all occurring at multiple levels of analysis—affect offender perceptions of opportunity, thus influencing where crime events will take place. Some attention has been given to the conceptual overlap across opportunity theories and, in piecemeal fashion, the theories have been applied at various levels of analysis. However, there is growing evidence, as reviewed here, supporting the utility in considering opportunity theories at multiple levels of analysis *simultaneously* in order to more fully understand crime events. To date, evidence in support of "general multilevel opportunity" is impressive, in our view.

The policy/practice implications for ignoring the notion of general multilevel opportunity are potentially quite dramatic. Most practical guidance on protecting victims, facilities, neighborhoods, and the like comes from single-level research studies (e.g., see Center for Problem-Oriented Policing). Yet … multilayered structures of opportunity exist. Failure to consider the multilevel nature of opportunity can lead to an overestimation of risk and protective factors at any particular level and an overreliance on policies and practices focused on single-level influences. Additionally, the effects of indicators of opportunity might be blunted or, alternatively, enhanced by indicators of opportunity at another level of analysis. Ignoring the possibility that effects of risk or protective factors are potentially conditional upon context can create misinformation about the extent to which variables are risky or protective.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does multilevel criminal opportunity theory build upon the theories of environmental criminology discussed in previous chapters?
2. How can lifestyle-routine activities theory be applied to understand crime concentration at the individual level of analysis (i.e., repeat victimization), the place level of analysis, the street level of analysis, and the neighborhood level of analysis? Answer the same question, except replace "lifestyle-routine activities theory" with each of the following: environmental design theory, rational choice theory, offender search theory, and social control theories.
3. What are the four major propositions of multilevel criminal opportunity theory?
4. What is a scenario in which individual-level or place-level measures of opportunity might interact with neighborhood-level measures of opportunity?

SECTION 4

DEVELOPMENT AND CRIME ACROSS THE LIFE COURSE

Francis T. Cullen
University of Cincinnati

Robert Agnew
Emory University

Pamela Wilcox
Pennsylvania State University

PART XII

GROWING UP CRIMINAL: TRAIT AND BIOSOCIAL THEORIES

Francis T. Cullen
University of Cincinnati

Robert Agnew
Emory University

Pamela Wilcox
Pennsylvania State University

Cesare Lombroso's perspective was the dominant theory of crime in the early 1900s. As indicated in Part I, a central part of the theory argues that many criminals are less evolved than noncriminals, as evidenced by such physical features as large jaws and cheekbones, swollen or protruding lips, and an arm span greater than the individual's height. The primitive or savage state of such criminals is what causes them to engage in crime. Among other things, they are said to be impulsive, vengeful, and unconcerned with the welfare of others.

Lombroso's theory was discredited when subsequent research failed to find that criminals differ from noncriminals in terms of the physical features he listed. And biological theories fell into decline for many years.

Sociological theories came to dominate criminology by the mid-1900s and continue to be dominant today (see Crews, 2009; Ellis et al., 2008; Laub and Sampson, 1991). Such theories explain crime not in terms of differences between individuals but in terms of differences in the social environments to which individuals are exposed. Certain types of environments, including family, school, peer group, and community, are said to increase the likelihood of crime. Most of the theories covered in this text are sociological: They describe those social environments most conductive to crime and the reasons these environments foster crime. These theories typically make little or no mention of individual differences, with several explicitly stating that there are no individual differences between criminals and noncriminals. Criminals are said to be much like noncriminals except that they are in environments conducive to crime. Most criminologists have been quite reluctant to acknowledge the role of biological factors and individual traits in explaining crime (see Chapters 41 and 42 and the discussions in Andrews and Bonta, 2006; Andrews and Wormith, 1989; Beaver and Walsh, 2011; Fishbein, 1998; Robinson and Beaver, 2009; Schwartz et al., 2019; Wright et al., 2008a).

In recent years, however, some criminologists have begun to criticize the *exclusive* focus of many crime theories on the social environment. Like Lombroso, they argue that individuals may differ from one another in ways that influence the likelihood of crime and that these differences may be in part biologically based. The theories advanced by these criminologists, however, are much more sophisticated than Lombroso's. First, they focus on a broader range of biological factors, including genetic inheritance and "biological harms" such as head injury, exposure to toxins

such as lead, and birth complications. Second, they better specify how these biological factors lead to crime. They do not argue that biological factors lead directly to crime; for example, no one argues that there is a gene that leads directly to crime. Rather, biological factors are said to affect the central and autonomic nervous systems in ways that contribute to traits conducive to crime, such as impulsivity, sensation seeking, and irritability. Third, most biological theories now recognize that the social environment influences whether biological factors lead to the development of certain traits and whether these traits lead to crime. Birth complications, for example, may be more likely to result in crime among children in disrupted versus intact families. Modern work on biology and crime, then, recognizes the importance of the social environment, and that is why theories in the area are commonly described as "biosocial" (see Beaver and Connolly, 2015; DeLisi, 2018; DeLisi et al., 2010; Portnoy, 2018; Rudo-Hutt et al., 2015).

It is important for criminologists to consider biological factors and individual traits for three fundamental reasons. First, the failure to consider biological factors and individual traits may result in inaccurate estimates of the effect of social factors on crime. Biological factors and individual traits are often associated with social factors, so the failure to "control for" or take account of them can lead to biased estimates of the effect of social factors on crime. For example, researchers may find that parental abuse is associated with higher levels of delinquency. But genetic factors may increase the likelihood that parents engage in abusive behavior and may, when passed onto children, increase the likelihood of delinquent behavior. The failure to take account of genes may therefore lead researchers to overestimate the effect of abuse on delinquency (see Beaver and Connolly, 2015; Beaver and Walsh, 2011: 10; Schwartz et al., 2019; Wright et al., 2015a). Second, biological factors and individual traits may *interact* with the social environment to produce crime. In particular, traits may influence *how* individuals respond to their environment. Even though the social environment has an important influence on crime, we know that individuals often respond to the same environment in different ways. This difference in response may be due to differences in individual traits. A child with an irritable disposition or a low IQ, for example, may be more likely to respond to stressors with crime. Third, individual traits may influence the social environment in ways that increase the likelihood of crime. In particular, individuals with traits such as impulsivity and risk seeking may shape their environment in ways conducive to crime. For example, impulsive children may evoke hostile responses from family members, teachers, and peers. Also, certain traits may cause individuals to seek out or sort themselves into environments conducive to crime. Individuals who like risky activities, for example, may choose to associate with delinquent peers (see Chapter 43 in Part XIII). (Environmental factors may also influence individual traits, as we have seen.)

A complete understanding of crime, then, requires a consideration of biological factors, individual traits, and the social environment. This is true of efforts to understand group as well as individual differences in crime (Beaver et al., 2015). For example, research suggests that sex differences in crime are a function not only of environmental factors, but also of biological factors and individual traits (see Beaver and Nedelec, 2015; Beaver and Walsh, 2011; Moffitt et al., 2001; Schwartz et al., 2019; Walsh and Beaver, 2009a, b). Among other things, females have lower rates of offending partly because they are higher in self-control than males. And sex differences in self-control are partly due to biological factors, such as differences in brain structure and functioning. The prefrontal cortex of the brain, responsible for the regulation of behavior, is larger and more active in females (Beaver and Nedelec, 2015; Rebellon et al., 2015).

The importance of considering biological, psychological, *and* social factors when explaining crime is forcibly made in Chapter 40 by Glueck and Glueck. They conducted a classic study on the causes of crime and delinquency, comparing 500 delinquents to 500 nondelinquents. The study was done at a time when sociological theories dominated the explanation of crime, but the Gluecks argued that biological and psychological factors also play an important role in the explanation of crime. Among other things, these factors help explain why people often respond to the same environment in different ways. Some people in disorganized communities, for example, become criminals while

others do not. The Gluecks argue that one must consider biological factors and individual traits to understand why this is so (and to fully explain crime). The Gluecks were somewhat limited in the biological factors they could consider, since they did not have access to contemporary research and methods in biology. The individual traits they list, however, have much in common with those listed by contemporary psychologists (compare the traits listed by the Gluecks to those listed by Caspi et al. in Chapter 42). In fact, the Gluecks helped inspire much of the recent biological and psychological research on crime, which is described in the remaining chapters of Part XII. Beyond that, they took a life-course approach, examining the way in which the causes of crime unfold from childhood through adulthood. Indeed, their work (and data) was a major inspiration for the contemporary life-course approach of Laub and Sampson, described in Chapter 44 (see also Laub and Sampson 1991, 2011).

Chapter 41 focuses on those biological factors that may influence traits conducive to crime, although this reading notes that such factors work with the social environment to produce these traits. Chapter 42 describes certain individual traits that contribute to crime. And researchers have developed integrated theories that assign a central role to biological factors, individual traits, and the social environment. Perhaps the best known is Moffitt's theory of life-course-persistent offending (see Chapter 43; Moffitt, 2006), but there are many additional examples (see Agnew, 2005; Brennan and Raine, 1997; Farrington, 2005; Lahey and Waldman, 2005; Raine et al., 1997; Rebellon et al., 2015; Robinson and Beaver, 2009; Simons et al., 2011; Thornberry and Krohn, 2005). At the most general level, these theories state that (1) biological and environmental factors influence the development of traits conducive to crime, (2) traits conducive to crime influence the social environment in ways that increase the likelihood of crime, and (3) crime is most likely among individuals who possess traits conducive to crime *and* are in aversive environments (e.g., troubled families, delinquent peer groups).

Biological Influences on Traits Conducive to Crime

Evidence suggests that there may be a genetic component to those traits conducive to crime and that such traits may also stem from "biological harms" of a nongenetic nature, such as head injury, exposure to certain toxic substances, and some types of birth complications.

Genetic Influences on Crime

Researchers have tried to estimate the extent to which crime and those traits conducive to crime are inherited using three major methods: twin studies, adoption studies, and molecular genetic studies (for excellent overviews, see Baker et al., 2006, 2010; Barnes and Tielbeek, 2018; Beaver and Walsh, 2011; Benson, 2013; Crews, 2009; Dick and Todd, 2006; Ellis and Walsh, 2006; Raine, 1993; Rhee and Waldman, 2007; Rowe, 2002; Robinson and Beaver, 2009; Schwartz et al., 2019; Tuvblad, 2015; Walsh and Beaver, 2009a, b; Wright et al., 2008b, 2015a). Twin studies compare identical twins to fraternal twins. Identical twins are genetically identical, while fraternal twins are about 50% genetically alike on those genes that vary among people (see Raine, 1993). It is assumed that twins—whether identical or fraternal—are exposed to the same environmental influences. If crime is genetically inherited, we would expect identical twins to be more similar in crime than fraternal twins. Most studies indicate that this is the case.

Adoption studies focus on children who were separated from their biological parents early in life. The traits of these children are compared to the traits of their biological parents. If crime is inherited, we would expect more crime among adopted children whose biological parents are criminal than among adopted children whose biological parents are not criminal. Most data suggest that this is the case. For example, one large study in Denmark found that

when neither adopted nor biological parents were criminal, 13.5% of the adopted boys had criminal convictions; when adoptive parents were not criminal and biological parents were, 20% of the adopted boys had criminal convictions (Raine, 1993). (Crime was most likely when both biological and adoptive parents were criminal—reinforcing the point that crime is a function of both biological factors and the social environment.)

Twin and adoption studies suggest that there is some genetic basis for crime, but they do not identify those genes that may influence the pre-disposition for crime. The field of molecular genetics examines variations in genes and relates these variations to body functions and behavioral traits. Recent research in this area has discovered several genes that may be related to traits conducive to crime, such as hyperactivity and impulsivity. We can expect much more research in this area in coming years (see Baker et al., 2006; Barnes and Tielbeek, 2018; Beaver and Walsh, 2011; Benson, 2013; Boccio et al., 2018; DeLisi et al., 2010; Dick and Todd, 2006; Rowe, 2002; Tuvblad, 2015; Walsh and Beaver, 2009a, 2011).

In sum, evidence suggests that crime is inherited to some degree. Studies suggest that about half of the variation in crime—and in those traits related to crime—is genetically based (Barnes and Tielbeek, 2018; Beaver and Connolly, 2015; Boisvert, 2015; Schwartz et al., 2019; Tuvblad, 2015). The remaining variation is explained by environmental factors. Interestingly, research suggests that "nonshared" environmental influences are much more important than shared influences. Consider two siblings. These siblings share certain environmental influences; most notably, they live in the same household and community—and so are exposed to many of the same family and community influences. But these siblings are also exposed to different or nonshared environmental influences. For example, they may associate with different peers. Also, their parents may treat them somewhat differently. Nonshared environmental influences appear to have a much larger effect on crime than shared influences. The implications of this finding for crime theory and research, however, are only just beginning to be explored. Nevertheless, genetic factors appear to play a substantial role in the explanation of crime.

At the same time, certain cautions are in order (see Beaver et al. 2015; Raine, 1993; Rowe, 2002; Tuvblad, 2015). Most notably, there is some evidence that genetic factors—and biological and psychological factors more generally—are most relevant to the explanation of what has been called "life-course-persistent" offending (see Chapter 43 by Moffitt). That is, these factors help us understand why some individuals offend at high rates over much of their lives. These high-rate, chronic offenders make up a small percentage of the population, but they account for a large share of all crime—including a majority of serious crime. Biological and psychological factors are said to be less relevant to the explanation of what has been called "adolescence-limited" offending. Most individuals commit a range of largely minor offenses during their adolescent years, and this adolescence-limited offending is said to be more strongly influenced by the social environment (see Chapter 43). However, biological factors have also been used to help explain such offending. Data indicate that the prefrontal cortex of the brain is still developing during adolescence. As a consequence, adolescents are less able than adults to control their behavior and emotions. This fact, in combination with the increased freedom and demands experienced by adolescents, may help explain adolescence-limited offending (Barnes et al., 2015; Ishikawa and Raine, 2003; Romer and Khurana, 2015; Schwartz et al., 2019; Walsh and Beaver, 2009a; Wright et al., 2008b).

The fact that there appears to be some genetic predisposition for crime raises a major question: Why is it that some individuals have genes that predispose them for crime? Several gene-based evolutionary theories have attempted to answer this question. These theories all argue that genes have effects on traits conducive to crime and that *under some conditions* individuals with such traits "might be able to reproduce at fairly high rates," thereby passing their genes on to others (Ellis and Walsh, 1997: 231). That is to say, certain traits conducive to crime may sometimes provide an evolutionary advantage (see Beaver and Walsh, 2011; Daly and Wilson, 1994; Ellis and Walsh, 1997, 2006; Figueredo et al., 2018; Jonason, 2015; Raine, 1993; Schwartz et al., 2019).

Certain of these evolutionary theories attempt to explain particular types of crime, such as rape, while others attempt to explain crime in general. All try to explain how people with genes promoting traits such as "pushiness" and "deception" may reproduce at high rates in certain circumstances. For example, "pushy" males, including those who rape, may be more likely to mate with multiple sex partners, particularly in large, impersonal societies where the likelihood of punishment for rape is low. Such males thus gain a reproductive advantage and are successful in passing their genes on to others.

"Biological Harms" and Crime

Evidence suggests that crime is also influenced by biological factors of a nongenetic origin, such as (1) the mother's poor health habits during pregnancy, including poor nutrition and alcohol and drug use; (2) certain types of delivery complications; (3) exposure to toxic substances such as lead; (4) poor diet; and (5) head injury (see Beaver and Walsh, 2011; Brennan et al., 1999, 2003; DeLisi, 2018; Denno, 1990; Ellis and Walsh, 2006; Perron et al., 2015; Raine, 1993, 2002; Robinson and Beaver, 2009; Scarpa and Raine, 2007; Séguin et al., 2018; Wright et al., 2008b). One study, for example, found that the children of mothers who smoke during the third trimester of their pregnancy are more likely to engage in crime as adults (Brennan et al., 1999).

The Central and Autonomic Nervous Systems

Most researchers suggest that genetic inheritance and biological harms contribute to traits and crime through their effect on the central nervous system (the brain and the spinal cord) and the autonomic nervous system (which controls the heart rate and gland secretions, among other things, and influences the emotional reaction to stimuli). (For overviews, see Agnew and Brezina, 2012; Beaver and Walsh, 2011; Crews, 2009; Ellis and Walsh, 2006; Farrington, 1996; Harcourt et al., 2020; Hollin, 1992; Ishikawa and Raine, 2003; McLernon et al., 2018; Ogilvie et al., 2011; Patrick and Verona, 2007; Raine, 1993, 2002, 2019; Rowe, 2002; Robinson and Beaver, 2009; Schug et al., 2015; Séguin et al., 2018; Walsh and Beaver, 2009b; Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985; Wright et al., 2008b.)

A number of possible effects have been explored. Genetic factors and biological harms may contribute to dysfunctions in the frontal lobe of the brain—which is involved in abstract thinking, planning, self-monitoring of behavior, and behavioral inhibition. Such dysfunctions, in turn, may contribute to such traits as hyperactivity, impulsivity, irritability, the reduced ability to learn from punishment, insensitivity/low empathy, difficulties in problem solving, and immature moral reasoning. Genetic factors and biological harms may also contribute to dysfunctions in the left hemisphere of the brain that have been linked to low verbal IQ scores. And biological factors may affect the autonomic nervous system, with data suggesting that criminals are underaroused. That is, criminals show less emotional response to stimuli (they are "physiologically 'drowsy,'" in the words of Bartol and Bartol, 1986: 69). This underarousal is reflected in their lower skin conductance (criminals sweat less in response to stimuli), lower resting heart rate, and slower alpha brain waves. This underarousal may contribute to such traits as impulsivity, sensation seeking, the inability to learn from punishment, and hyperactivity (Portnoy, 2018; Portnoy et al., 2014). Individuals who are underaroused are less affected by punishment and require more to stimulate them—which may cause them to become easily distracted, overly active, and in greater need of thrills/excitement.

Researchers are now investigating the ways in which genetic inheritance and biological harms may affect the central and autonomic nervous systems. For example, recent data suggest that some of these factors may result in reduced levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin. Neurotransmitters allow for communication between brain cells and

underlie all human behavior, thoughts, perceptions, and emotions. Reduced serotonin may lower one's level of inhibition, contributing to traits such as impulsivity and the reduced ability to learn from punishment.

Chapter 41 by Ling and associates summarizes much of the recent research on biology and crime, including research on the levels of arousal within individuals, the brain, and genetics. They state that biological factors likely affect crime through their impact on traits such as psychopathy (see below) and sensation seeking. And they note that biological and social factors interact in their effect on crime. (For further information, see Barnes et al., 2019; Beaver and Walsh, 2011; Boccio et al., 2018; Crews, 2009; DeLisi and Vaughn, 2015; DeLisi et al., 2010; Ellis and Walsh, 2006; Lahey et al., 2003; McLernon et al., 2018; Patrick and Verona, 2007; Portnoy, 2018; Raine, 1993, 2002, 2019; Raine et al., 1997; Robinson and Beaver, 2009; Rowe, 2002; Rutter et al., 1998; Schwartz et al., 2019; Séguin et al., 2018; Walsh and Beaver, 2009b).

Environmental Influences on Traits

It should be kept in mind that traits conducive to crime are also influenced by the individual's social environment (see Agnew, 1997; Caspi et al., 1994; Colvin, 2000; Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; Lahey and Waldman, 2003, 2005, 2007; Moreira et al., 2020; Reising et al., 2019; Robinson and Beaver, 2009; Rowe, 2002; Simmons et al., 2019; Wade and Cairney, 2006; Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985; Wright et al., 2008a). Whether individuals develop such traits depends on the socialization efforts of parents and others; for example, it depends on the extent to which parents try to teach or "instill" such traits as self-restraint and concern for others (as suggested above, biological factors influence the likelihood that individuals will successfully learn such traits). It may also depend on such things as the adversity of the individual's environment. Some have suggested, for example, that poor, inner-city residents who are mistreated on a regular basis are more likely to develop irritable dispositions (see Anderson, 1999; Bernard, 1990). Crime-related traits, then, are a function of the environment as well as biological factors.

It is often difficult to separate out the effects of environmental and biological factors in a precise manner. Many types of biological harm are a function of the social environment—such as one's social class. Lower-class individuals, for example, are more likely to be exposed to lead and have poor prenatal care (Denno, 1990; Walsh et al., 2015). Also, certain social factors, such as poverty, neighborhood violence, and child maltreatment, may directly affect the individual's biological state—including brain development and whether genes are expressed or get "turned on" (see Bajnath et al., 2020; Cabrera et al., 2020; Portnoy, 2018; Rutter et al., 2006; Walsh and Beaver, 2009a, b; Wright et al., 2008b). At the same time, biological factors can shape one's social environment. Children with dysfunctions in their central and autonomic nervous systems, for example, may be more difficult for parents to raise. As such, they may be more likely to elicit negative reactions from their parents, including harsh discipline and abusive behavior (Beaver and Connolly, 2015). Further, it has been suggested that environmental and biological factors condition the effect of each other on such traits. For example, biological factors such as genetic inheritance and birth complications may be *more* likely to lead to the crime-related traits if the individual is in a poor family environment. Likewise, a poor family environment may be more likely to lead to such traits if the individual has a genetic predisposition for them or has experienced certain types of biological harm. Given the intimate relationship between biological and social factors, there is now some debate over whether it is possible to estimate the *separate* effects of genetic and environmental factors on traits and crime (e.g., the claim that genes account for 50% of the variation in crime; Burt and Simons, 2015; Wright et al., 2015b). The important point to remember is that there is evidence suggesting that criminogenic traits and crime are a function of both biological and environmental factors (see especially Brennan and Raine, 1997; Lahey and Waldman, 2005; Raine, 2002; Raine et al., 1997; Robinson and Beaver, 2009; Rowe, 2002; Rutter, 1997; Rutter et al., 1998, 2006; Simons et al., 2011; Wade and Cairney, 2006; Wright et al., 2008b).

Individual Traits and Crime

Biological and environmental factors, then, may lead to traits conducive to crime. Several such traits have already been mentioned. Traits are "relatively stable ways of perceiving, thinking about, and behaving toward the environment and oneself" (Blackburn, 1993). For example, if a person regularly acts without thinking, we say that this person possesses the trait of impulsivity. Data suggest that several individual traits increase the likelihood of crime, including low verbal IQ, attention deficit/hyperactivity, impulsivity, risk seeking, irritability, insensitivity to others/low empathy, and poor social and problem-solving skills (see Agnew, 2016; Agnew and Brezina, 2012; Andrews and Bonta, 2006; DeLisi and Vaughn, 2015; Dodge, 2003; Ellis and Walsh, 2006; Farrington, 1994; Farrington and Welsh, 2007; Hyatt et al., 2018; Jolliffe and Farrington, 2010; Jones et al., 2011; Lahey and Waldman, 2007; Lynam and Miller, 2004; Miller and Lynam, 2001; Nedelec et al., 2015; Robinson and Beaver, 2009; Rutter et al., 1998; Simmons et al., 2019). Also, major mental illness increases the likelihood of crime and violence, although most people with a major mental disorder are not violent (Hodgins, 1995; Reising et al., 2019; Robinson and Beaver, 2009; Séguin et al., 2018; Silver, 2006). Individuals with such traits and conditions are more likely to engage in crime in a particular situation, are more likely to elicit negative responses from others (which may foster crime), and are more likely to sort themselves into negative environments (which may foster crime). For example, irritable individuals may be more likely to respond to mild slights with aggression, provoke insults and challenges from others, associate with other criminals, and have poor employment histories.

Psychologists and others have argued that many of these specific traits are related to one another and that they often cluster in the same individuals. Several researchers have developed lists of related traits, with some researchers arguing that most of these traits cluster together into one "super-trait." Perhaps the best-known example is the collection of traits that characterize the "psychopath," which include impulsivity, sensation seeking, an inability to learn from punishment, irritability, and insensitivity/low empathy (see Blackburn, 1993; Lykken, 1995, 1996; Séguin et al., 2018; many researchers now distinguish between different types of psychopaths, most notably primary and secondary psychopaths). Another well-known example is provided in Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) description of individuals who are low in self-control (see Chapter 17 in Part V). The super-trait of low self-control also includes many of the specific traits listed above.

Data increasingly suggest, however, that those traits related to crime cluster into a few super-traits. One such trait refers to the individual's cognitive abilities, especially verbal abilities. This trait is often measured by the individual's verbal IQ score, and it influences such things as the individual's social and problem-solving skills, academic performance, and ability to communicate with others (Lahey and Waldman, 2005, 2007; Nigg and Huang-Pollock, 2003). Other traits refer to the individual's temperament. Chapter 42 by Caspi et al. draws on the description of traits provided by Tellegen (1985), who proposed that the human personality can be described in terms of three super-traits: negative emotionality, constraint, and positive emotionality. This conception is well grounded in research and is widely accepted in psychology. As the Caspi et al. chapter demonstrates, there is good reason to believe that the super-traits of negative emotionality and low constraint increase the likelihood of crime. Several other studies also support this conclusion—although they sometimes use different terms to describe these traits or they refer to closely related traits (e.g., Andrews and Bonta, 2006; Blonigen and Patrick, 2018; Colder and Stice, 1998; DeLisi and Vaughn, 2015; Farrington and Welsh, 2007; Henry et al., 1996; Hyatt et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2011; Lahey and Waldman, 2005, 2007; Lynam and Miller, 2004; Miller and Lynam, 2001; Pratt and Cullen, 2000; Rothbart and Bates, 1998; Simons et al., 2011).

Individuals high in negative emotionality are more likely than others to experience events as aversive, to attribute these events to the malicious behavior of others, to experience intense emotional reactions such as anger to these

events, and to respond to these events in an aggressive or antisocial manner. Individuals low in constraint are more likely to act on their impulses, including impulses of a criminal nature. Such individuals tend to be impulsive, are risk taking/sensation seeking, reject conventional norms, and are unconcerned with the feelings or rights of others. It is not difficult to understand why they would be more likely to engage in crime.

The Interactive Effect of Biological Factors, Traits, and the Social Environment on Crime

Whether individuals with a biological predisposition to crime or with the traits we have described actually engage in crime is often said to depend on the social environment. For example, individuals with a biological predisposition may engage in little crime if they are raised in a loving, supportive family environment but may engage in much crime if they are rejected and abused. Many argue that crime is most likely when individuals who are biologically predisposed to crime (or have crime-related traits) are in environments conducive to crime (the "dual hazard" prediction). Such environments might include families in which parents reject their children and treat them in a harsh manner or poor, inner-city communities plagued by a host of social problems, such as gangs and limited job opportunities. There are several reasons for the dual hazard prediction. For example, one popular argument states that traits such as IQ and negative emotionality influence the ability of individuals to learn how to behave in a noncriminal manner (Brennan and Raine, 1997; Nigg and Huang-Pollock, 2003). That is, some individuals have an easier time learning how to conform than others. But whether they learn how to conform also depends on their social environment. For example, do their parents and others make a good effort to teach them to conform? Crime, then, is most likely when individuals are biologically disposed to crime or have traits conducive to crime *and* are in unfavorable environments. Another popular argument states that these traits influence how individuals respond to temptations and provocations. For example, individuals low in constraint are more likely to take advantage of tempting opportunities for crime, while individuals high in negative emotionality are more likely to respond to provocations like insults with violence (Agnew, 2016; Agnew et al., 2002; Dodge and Sherrill, 2007; Lahey and Waldman, 2005, 2007). Crime, then, is most likely among individuals who possess these traits and are in environments where the temptations and provocations for crime are abundant.

The dual hazard prediction has received much support (see Agnew, 2016; Agnew et al., 2002; Baker et al., 2010; Barnes et al., 2019; Beaver and Walsh, 2011; Brennan and Raine, 1997; DeLisi, 2018; DeLisi et al., 2010; DiLalla and Bersted, 2015; Dodge and Sherrill, 2007; Keenan and Shaw, 2003; Lahey and Waldman, 2003; Portnoy, 2018; Raine et al., 1997; Robinson and Beaver, 2009; Rutter et al., 1998; Scarpa and Raine, 2007; Wright et al., 2001). For example, a study by Tibbetts and Piquero (1999) found that males with low birth weights were more likely to start offending at an early age if they came from low–socioeconomic status families. Not all studies find evidence for biosocial interactions, however. Further, some studies find that biological factors are most likely to lead to crime in advantaged rather than disadvantaged environments. For example, one study found that low heart rate was most likely to lead to crime among those from intact homes versus homes broken by divorce or separation (Wadsworth, 1976; see also Baker et al., 2010; Benson, 2013; Raine, 2002; Scarpa and Raine, 2007). Such findings are usually explained by arguing that biological factors are most important when the "social push" for crime is minimal (i.e., when individuals come from environments where there is little pressure to engage in crime). Finally, certain recent research suggests that some individuals are genetically predisposed to be more responsive to the environment, such that they are more strongly influenced by both favorable *and* adverse environments. That is, such individuals benefit more when they are in favorable environments, such as loving and supportive families, and they are more likely to turn to crime when they are in adverse environments, such as harsh or abusive families (Agnew, 2016; DiLalla and

Bersted, 2015; Portnoy, 2018; Simons et al., 2011; Wright et al., 2015b). Overall, however, the evidence tends to favor the proposition that crime is most likely when individuals are biologically predisposed to crime (or have traits conducive to crime) *and* are in environments favorable to crime.

Given these arguments, it is not surprising that researchers have developed integrated theories that state that crime is a function of biological factors, individual traits, the social environment, and the interaction between these factors. For example, Lahey and Waldman (2003, 2005, 2007) have developed an integrative theory focusing on the development of antisocial behavior. This theory states that crime is influenced by cognitive and temperamental traits, such as intelligence and irritability. These traits, in turn, are a function of both genetic and environmental factors. Crime is also influenced by the social environment, including the family and peer environment. Further, individual traits and environmental factors affect one another; most notably, those with traits such as irritability are more likely to evoke negative responses from others and sort themselves into environments that are conducive to crime. Finally, crime is most likely when individuals possess traits such as low intelligence and irritability *and* are in environments such as troubled families and antisocial peer groups. This combination of negative traits and environments often leads to early, frequent, and serious offending (see Chapter 43 and Agnew, 2005, 2016; Rebellon et al., 2015; Robinson and Beaver, 2009; Simons et al., 2011 for similar theories).

In sum, biological factors and the individual traits influenced by such factors play a central role in the explanation of crime. They influence the social environments in which people find themselves and play a major role in determining how people respond to such environments. In particular, they help us understand why only some of the individuals exposed to aversive environments, such as abusive families or antisocial peer groups, turn to crime. Nevertheless, most of the theories in this book do not devote any consideration to biological factors and individual traits. Rather, they simply focus on the effect of the social environment on crime. Sociological criminologists, however, are starting to devote much more attention to the role of biological factors and individual traits in their theories. And when reading the sociological theories presented in this book, you should ask yourself what role biological factors and individual traits might play in these theories. (see Beaver et al., 2015; Schwartz et al., 2019).

Consider social learning theory. Biological factors and individual traits influence the likelihood that individuals will be exposed to prosocial and criminal environments. Individuals who are low in self-control, for example, are more likely to be rejected by conventional peers and to select criminal peers as friends. Relatedly, biological factors and traits influence the learning experiences of individuals in prosocial and criminal environments. Those low in intelligence, for example, are less likely to be reinforced by school officials and employers. Further, biological factors and traits influence the susceptibility of individuals to prosocial and criminal learning. Some individuals, for example, are more likely than others to find the company of criminal peers reinforcing, to adopt the criminal beliefs of such peers, and to model their criminal behavior (see Kretschmer et al., 2015; Vaske, 2015).

Likewise, biological factors and traits play an integral role in strain theory. They influence the exposure to strains. Those high in negative emotionality, for example, may elicit negative reactions from others, including parents, teachers, and employers. And they are more likely to end up in social environments where the likelihood of negative treatment is high, such as bad jobs and high-crime communities. Biological factors and traits also influence the reaction to strains. Some individuals are more easily upset by strains, are more likely to become angry when upset, and are more likely to cope in an aggressive or criminal manner (DeLisi and Vaughn, 2015; Stogner, 2015; Vaske and Boisvert, 2015; Winiarski et al., 2015).

Biological factors and individual traits also play a key role in control theories (Boisvert, 2015; DeLisi, 2015; Vazsonyi et al., 2015). There is good evidence that self-control, a major trait affecting crime, has a strong genetic basis. And individuals with traits such as low self-control and irritability are more likely to be low in *social* control (see Part V). Individuals with these traits are less responsive to the efforts of others to bond with them, supervise them, instruct

them, and teach them beliefs condemning crime. In fact, individuals with these traits often frustrate and overwhelm others, such as parents and teachers, thereby undermining social bonds. Also, parents with these traits are less likely to form strong bonds to their children, properly supervise them, and provide them with the support necessary to do well in school and succeed later in life.

There is little doubt that future work will better integrate biosocial and sociological theories of crime and, in doing so, more fully explain crime.

References

Agnew, Robert. 1997. “Stability and Crime over the Life Course: A Strain Explanation.” In Terence P. Thornberry (ed.), *Developmental Theories of Crime and Delinquency: Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **7**, pp. 101–132. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

____. 2005. *Why Do Criminals Offend? A General Theory of Crime and Delinquency*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

____. 2016. “A Theory of Crime Resistance and Susceptibility.” *Criminology* **54**: 181–211.

Agnew, Robert and Timothy Brezina. 2012. *Juvenile Delinquency: Causes and Control*, 4th edition. New York: Oxford University Press

Agnew, Robert, Timothy Brezina, John Paul Wright, and Francis T. Cullen. 2002. “Strain, Personality Traits, and Delinquency: Extending General Strain Theory.” *Criminology* **40**: 43–72.

Anderson, Elijah. 1999. *Code of the Street*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Andrews, D. A. and James Bonta. 2006. *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*, 4th edition. Cincinnati: Anderson.

Andrews, D. A. and J. Stephen Wormith. 1989. “Personality and Crime: Knowledge Destruction and Construction in Criminology,” *Justice Quarterly* **6**: 289–309.

Bajnath, Vijay, Scott Harcourt, Samantha Spagna, and Anna Derbaly. 2020. “The Effects of Violent Urban Settings on Neuropsychological Outcomes: A Review.” *Aggression and Violent Behavior* **54**: 1–7.

Baker, Laura A., Serena Bezdjian, and Adrian Raine. 2006. “Behavioral Genetics: The Science of Antisocial Behavior.” *Law and Contemporary Problems* **69**: 7–46.

Baker, Laura A., Catherine Tuvblad, and Adrian Raine. 2010. “Genetics and Crime.” In Eugene McLaughlin and Tim Newburn (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 21–39. London: Sage.

Barnes, J. C., Cody Jorgensen, Daniel Pacheco, and Michael TenEyck. 2015. “The Puzzling Relationship Between Age and Criminal Behavior.” In Kevin M. Beaver, J. C. Barnes, and Brian B. Boutwell (eds.), *The Nurture Versus Biosocial Debate in Criminology,* pp. 397–413. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Barnes, J. C., Hexuan Liu, Ryan T. Motz, Peter T. Tanksley, Rachel Kail, Amber L. Beckley, Daniel W. Belsky, Benjamin W. Domingue, Terrie E. Moffitt, Travis C. Pratt, and Jasmin Wertz. 2019. “The Propensity for Aggressive Behavior and Lifetime Incarceration Risk: A Test for Gene-Environment Interaction (G X E) Using Whole-Genome Data.” *Aggression and Violent Behavior* **49**: 1–11.

Barnes, J. C. and Jorim Tielbeek. 2018. “The Behavioral Genetics of Aggression and Violent Behavior.” In Alexander T. Vazsonyi, Daniel J. Flannery, and Matt DeLisi (eds.), *Violent Behavior and Aggression,* pp. 83–105. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Bartol, Curt R. and Anne M. Bartol. 1986. *Criminal Behavior: A Psychosocial Approach*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Beaver, Kevin M., J. C. Barnes, and Brian B. Boutwell, eds. 2015. *The Nurture Versus Biosocial Debate in Criminology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Beaver, Kevin M. and Eric J. Connolly. 2015. “Key Findings from Biosocial Research and What They Mean for the Future of Criminology.” In Matt DeLisi and Michael G. Vaughn (eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of*

Biosocial Criminology, pp. 46–56. New York: Routledge.

Beaver, Kevin M. and Joseph L. Nedelec. 2015. "A Biosocial Explanation for Male-Female Differences in Criminal Involvement." In Kevin M. Beaver, J. C. Barnes, and Brian B. Boutwell (eds.), *The Nurture Versus Biosocial Debate in Criminology,* pp. 43–54. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Beaver, Kevin M. and Anthony Walsh. 2011. *The Ashgate Research Companion to Biosocial Theories of Crime*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate.

Benson, Michael L. 2013. *Crime and the Life Course*. New York: Routledge.

Bernard, Thomas J. 1990. "Angry Aggression Among the 'Truly Disadvantaged.'" *Criminology* **28**: 73–96.

Blackburn, Ronald. 1993. *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley.

Blonigen, Daniel M. and Christopher J. Patrick. 2018. "Applying Empirically Based Trait Models to an Understanding of Personality and Violence." In Alexander T. Vazsonyi, Daniel J. Flannery, and Matt DeLisi (eds.), *Violent Behavior and Aggression,* pp. 241–258. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Boccio, Cashen M., Marianna McBride, and Kevin M. Beaver. 2018. "Molecular Genetics of Aggression and Violent Crime." In Alexander T. Vazsonyi, Daniel J. Flannery, and Matt DeLisi (eds.), *Violent Behavior and Aggression,* pp. 187–205. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Boisvert, Danielle. 2015. "A Biosocial View of Social Bond Theory." In Kevin M. Beaver, J. C. Barnes, and Brian B. Boutwell (eds.), *The Nurture Versus Biosocial Debate in Criminology,* pp. 236–251. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Brennan, Patricia A., Emily R. Grekin, and Sarnoff A. Mednick. 1999. "Maternal Smoking During Pregnancy and Adult Male Criminal Outcomes." *Archives of General Psychiatry* **56**(3): 215–219.

____. 2003. "Prenatal and Perinatal Influences on Conduct Disorder and Serious Delinquency." In Benjamin B. Lahey, Terrie E. Moffitt, and Avshalom Caspi (eds.), *Causes of Conduct Disorder and Juvenile Delinquency*, pp. 319–341. New York: Guilford.

Brennan, Patricia A. and Adrian Raine. 1997. "Biosocial Bases of Antisocial Behavior: Psychophysiological, Neurological and Cognitive Factors." *Clinical Psychology Review* **17**: 589–604.

Burt, Callie H. and Ronald L. Simons. 2015. "Heritability Studies in the Postgenomic Era: The Fatal Flaw Is Conceptual." *Criminology* **53**: 103–112.

Cabrera, Carla, Herman Torres, and Scott Harcourt. 2020. "The Neurological and Neuropsychological Effects of Child Maltreatment." *Aggression and Violent Behavior* **54**:1–11.

Caspi, Avshalom, Terrie E. Moffitt, Phil A. Silva, Magda Stouthamer-Loeber, Robert F. Krueger, and Pamela S. Schmutte. 1994. "Are Some People Crime-Prone: The Personality-Crime Relationship Across Countries, Genders, Races and Methods." *Criminology* **32**: 163–195.

Colder, Craig R. and Eric Stice. 1998. "A Longitudinal Study of the Interactive Effects of Impulsivity and Anger on Adolescent Problem Behavior." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* **27**: 255–274.

Colvin, Mark. 2000. *Crime and Coercion*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Crews, Angela D. 2009. "Biological Theory." In J. Mitchell Miller (ed.), *21st Century Criminology: A Reference Handbook*, pp. 184–200. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Daly, Martin and Margo Wilson. 1994. "Evolutionary Psychology of Male Aggression." In J. Archer (ed.), *Male Violence*, pp. 253–288. London: Routledge.

DeLisi, Matt. 2015. "Low Self-Control Is a Brain-Based Disorder." In Kevin M. Beaver, J. C. Barnes, and Brian B. Boutwell (eds.), *The Nurture Versus Biosocial Debate in Criminology,* pp. 172–182. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

____. 2018. “The Interaction of Nature and Nurture in Antisocial Behavior.” In Alexander T. Vazsonyi, Daniel J. Flannery, and Matt DeLisi (eds.), *Violent Behavior and Aggression,* pp. 159–186. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

DeLisi, Matt, Kevin M. Beaver, Michael G. Vaughn, and John Paul Wright. 2010. “Contemporary Retrospectives on Biosocial Theories.” In Heith Copes and Volkan Topalli (eds.), *Criminological Theory: Readings and Retrospectives,* pp. 74–84. New York: McGraw Hill.

DeLisi, Matt and Michael G. Vaughn. 2015. “Temperament as a Biosocial Construct for Understanding Antisocial Behavior.” In Matt DeLisi and Michael G. Vaughn (eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Biosocial Criminology*, pp. 331–335. New York: Routledge.

Denno, Deborah W. 1990. *Biology and Violence*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Dick, Danielle M. and Richard D. Todd. 2006. “Genetic Contributions.” In Robert T. Ammerman (ed.), *Comprehensive Handbook of Personality and Psychopathology*, pp. 16–28. New York: John Wiley.

DiLalla, Lisabeth F. and Kyle Bersted. 2015. “Biosocial Foundations of Externalizing Behaviors.” In Matt DeLisi and Michael G. Vaughn (eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Biosocial Criminology*, pp. 349–364. New York: Routledge.

Dodge, Kenneth A. 2003. “Do Social Information-Processing Patterns Mediate Aggressive Behavior?” In Benjamin B. Lahey, Terrie E. Moffitt, and Avshalom Caspi (eds.), *Causes of Conduct Disorder and Juvenile Delinquency*, pp. 254–274. New York: Guilford.

Dodge, Kenneth A. and Michelle R. Sherrill. 2007. “The Interaction of Nature and Nurture in Antisocial Behavior.” In Daniel J. Flannery, Alexander T. Vazsonyi, and Irwin D. Waldman (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Violent Behavior and Aggression*, pp. 215–242. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Ellis, Lee, Jonathon A. Cooper, and Anthony Walsh. 2008. “Criminologists’ Opinions About Causes and Theories of Crime and Delinquency: A Follow-Up.” *Criminologist* **33**(3): 23–26.

Ellis, Lee and Anthony Walsh. 1997. “Gene-Based Evolutionary Theories in Criminology.” *Criminology* **35**: 229–276.

____. 2006. *Criminology*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn.

Farrington, David P. 1994. *Psychological Explanations of Crime*. Aldershot, UK: Dartmouth.

____ 1996. “The Explanation and Prevention of Youthful Offending.” In J. David Hawkins (ed.), *Delinquency and Crime: Current Theories*, pp. 68–148. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

____. 2005. “The Integrated Cognitive Antisocial Potential (ICAP) Theory.” In David P. Farrington (ed.), *Integrated Development and Life-Course Theories of Offending*, pp. 73–92. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Farrington, David P. and Brandon C. Welsh. 2007. *Saving Children from a Life of Crime*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Figueredo, Aurelio Jose, Emily Anne Patch, Marisol Perez-Ramos, and Gabriela Jacqueline Cruz. 2018. “The Dark Violence Hybrid: The Cross-Cultural Validation of an Integrative Model.” In Alexander T. Vazsonyi, Daniel J. Flannery, and Matt DeLisi (eds.), *Violent Behavior and Aggression,* pp. 65–80. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Fishbein, Diana. 1998. “Building Bridges.” *Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences ACJS Today* **17**(2): 1, 3–5.

Gottfredson, Michael R. and Travis Hirschi. 1990. *A General Theory of Crime*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Harcourt, Scott, Charles J. Golden, and Lisa Lashley. 2020. “Introduction to the Special Issue: The Brain and Violence.” *Aggression and Violent Behavior* **54**: 1–3.

Henry, Bill, Avshalom Caspi, Terrie Moffitt, and Phil A. Silva. 1996. “Temperamental and Familial Predictors of Violent and Nonviolent Criminal Convictions: Age 3 to Age 18.” *Developmental Psychology* **32**: 614–623.

Hodgins, Sheilagh. 1995. “Major Mental Disorder and Crime: An Overview.” *Psychology, Crime and Law* **2**: 5–17.

Hollin, Clive. 1992. *Criminal Behaviour: A Psychological Approach to Explanation and Prevention*. London: Falmer Press.

Hyatt, Courtland S., Chelsea E. Sleep, Brandon M. Weiss, and Joshua D. Miller. 2018. “Personality and Aggression: A General Trait Perspective.” In Alexander T. Vazsonyi, Daniel J. Flannery, and Matt DeLisi (eds.), *Violent Behavior and Aggression,* pp. 221–237. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Ishikawa, Sharon S. and Adrian Raine. 2003. “Prefrontal Deficits and Antisocial Behavior.” In Benjamin B. Lahey, Terrie E. Moffitt, and Avshalom Caspi (eds.), *Causes of Conduct Disorder and Juvenile Delinquency*, pp. 277–303. New York: Guilford.

Jolliffe, Darrick and David P. Farrington. 2010. “Individual Differences and Offending.” In Eugene McLaughlin and Tim Newburn (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 40–55. London: Sage.

Jonason, Peter K. 2015. “An Evolutionary Perspective on Interpersonal Violence.” In Matt DeLisi and Michael G. Vaughn (eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Biosocial Criminology*, pp. 32–45. New York: Routledge.

Jones, Shayne E., Joshua D. Miller, and Donald R. Lyman. 2011. “Personality, Antisocial Behavior, and Aggression: A Meta-Analytic Review.” *Journal of Criminal Justice* **39**: 329–337.

Keenan, Kate and Daniel S. Shaw. 2003. “Starting at the Beginning.” In Benjamin B. Lahey, Terrie E. Moffitt, and Avshalom Caspi (eds.), *Causes of Conduct Disorder and Juvenile Delinquency*, pp. 153–181. New York: Guilford.

Kretschmer, Tina, Jan Kornelis Dijkstra, and Renee Veenstra. 2015. “Peer Effects and Molecular Genetics in Adolescent Antisocial Behavior.” In Matt DeLisi and Michael G. Vaughn (eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Biosocial Criminology*, pp. 101–114. New York: Routledge.

Lahey, Benjamin B., Terrie E. Moffitt, and Avshalom Caspi. 2003. *Causes of Conduct Disorder and Juvenile Delinquency*. New York: Guilford.

Lahey, Benjamin B. and Irwin D. Waldman. 2003. “A Developmental Propensity Model of the Origins of Conduct Problems During Childhood and Adolescence.” In Benjamin B. Lahey, Terrie E. Moffitt, and Avshalom Caspi (eds.), *Causes of Conduct Disorder and Juvenile Delinquency*, pp. 77–117. New York: Guilford.

____. 2005. “A Developmental Model of the Propensity to Offend During Childhood and Adolescence.” In David P. Farrington (ed.), *Integrated Developmental and Life-Course Theories of Offending*, pp. 15–50. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

____. 2007. “Personality Dispositions and the Development of Violence and Conduct Problems.” In Daniel J. Flannery, Alexander T. Vazsonyi, and Irwin D. Waldman (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Violent Behavior and Aggression*, pp. 260–287. New York: Cambridge University Press.

____. 1991. “The Sutherland-Glueck Debate: On the Sociology of Criminal Knowledge.” *American Journal of Sociology* **96**: 1402–1440.

Laub, John H. and Robert J. Sampson. 2011. “Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck’s Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency Study.” In Francis T. Cullen, Cheryl Lero Jonson, Andrew J. Myer, and Freda Adler (eds.), *The Origins of American Criminology*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Lykken, David T. 1995. *The Antisocial Personalities*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

____. 1996. "Psychopathy, Sociopathy, and Crime." *Society* **34** (1): 29–38.

Lynam, Donald R. and Joshua Miller. 2004. "Personality Pathways to Impulsive Behavior and Their Relations to Deviance." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* **20**: 319–341.

McLernon, Heather, Jeremy Feiger, and Robert Schug. 2018. "Neuroimaging Evidence of Violence and Aggression." In Alexander T. Vazsonyi, Daniel J. Flannery, and Matt DeLisi (eds.), *Violent Behavior and Aggression,* pp. 106–124. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Miller, Joshua D. and Donald Lynam. 2001. "Structural Models of Personality and Their Relation to Antisocial Behavior: A Meta-Analytic Review." *Criminology* **39**: 765–798.

Moffitt, Terrie E. 2006. "A Review of the Research on the Taxonomy of Life-Course Persistent Versus Adolescence-Limited Antisocial Behavior." In Francis T. Cullen, John Paul Wright, and Kristie R. Blevins (eds.), *Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory*, pp. 277–312. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Moffitt, Terrie E., Avshalom Caspi, Michael Rutter, and Phil A. Silva. 2001. *Sex Differences in Antisocial Behavior*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Moreira, Diana, Diana Sa Moreira, Susana Oliveira, Filipe Nunes Ribeiro, Fernando Barbosa, Marisalva, and Valeria Gomes. 2020. "Relationship between Childhood Adverse Experiences and Psychopathy: A Systematic Review." *Aggression and Violent Behavior* **53**: 1–14.

Nedelec, Joseph H., Joseph A. Schwartz, and Eric J. Connolly. 2015. "Intelligence as the Quintessential Biosocial Variable." In Matt DeLisi and Michael G. Vaughn (eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Biosocial Criminology*, pp. 463–485. New York: Routledge.

Nigg, Joel T. and Cynthia L. Huang-Pollock. 2003. "An Early-Onset Model of the Role of Executive Functions and Intelligence in Conduct Disorder/Delinquency." In Benjamin B. Lahey, Terrie E. Moffitt, and Avshalom Caspi (eds.), *Causes of Conduct Disorder and Juvenile Delinquency*, pp. 227–253. New York: Guilford.

Ogilvie, James M., Anna L. Stewart, Raymond C. Chan, and David K. Shum. 2011. "Neuropsychological Measures of Executive Function and Antisocial Behavior: A Meta-Analysis." *Criminology* **49**: 1063–1108.

Patrick, Christopher J. and Edelyn Verona. 2007. "The Psychophysiology of Aggression: Autonomic, Electrocortical, and Neuro-Imaging Findings." In Daniel J. Flannery, Alexander T. Vazsonyi, and Irwin D. Waldman (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Violent Behavior and Aggression*, pp. 111–150. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Perron, Brian E., Michael G. Vaughn, Joseph Ryan, Christopher Salas-Wright, Mary Ruffolo, and Erik Guerrero. 2015. "Self-Reported Head Injuries Among Delinquent Youth." In Matt DeLisi and Michael G. Vaughn (eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Biosocial Criminology*, pp. 300–314. New York: Routledge.

Portnoy, Jill. 2018. "Biosocial Bases of Aggression and Antisocial Behavior." In Alexander T. Vazsonyi, Daniel J. Flannery, and Matt DeLisi (eds.), *Violent Behavior and Aggression,* pp. 125–135. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Portnoy, Jill, Adrian Raine, Frances R. Chen, Dustin Pardini, Rolf Loeber, and J. Richard Jennings. 2014. "Heart Rate and Antisocial Behavior: The Mediating Role of Impulsive Sensation Seeking." *Criminology* **52**: 292–311.

Pratt, Travis C. and Francis T. Cullen. 2000. "The Empirical Status of Gottfredson and Hirschi's General Theory of Crime." *Criminology* **38**: 931–964.

Raine, Adrian. 1993. *The Psychopathology of Crime*. San Diego: Academic Press.

____. 2002. “The Biological Basis of Crime.” In James Q. Wilson and Joan Petersilia (eds.), *Crime*, pp. 43–74. Oakland, CA: ICS Press.

____. 2019. “The Neuromoral Theory of Antisocial, Violent, and Psychopathic Behavior.” *Psychiatry Research* **277**: 64–69.

Raine, Adrian, Patricia A. Brennan, David P. Farrington, and Sarnoff A. Mednick. 1997. *Biosocial Bases of Violence*. New York: Plenum.

Rebellon, Cesar J., J. C. Barnes, and Robert Agnew. 2015. “A Unified Theory of Crime and Delinquency.” In Matt DeLisi and Michael G. Vaughn (eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Biosocial Criminology*, pp. 3–21. New York: Routledge.

Reising, Kim, David P. Farrington, Maria M. Ttofi, Alex R. Piquero, and Jeremy W. Coid. 2019. “Childhood Risk Factors for Personality Disorder Symptoms Related to Violence.” *Aggression and Violent Behavior* **49**: 2–14.

Rhee, Soo Hyun and Irwin D. Waldman. 2007. “Behavior-Genetics of Criminality and Aggression.” In Daniel J. Flannery, Alexander T. Vazsonyi, and Irwin D. Waldman (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Violent Behavior and Aggression*, pp. 77–90. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Robinson, Matthew B. and Kevin M. Beaver. 2009. *Why Crime? An Interdisciplinary Approach to Explaining Criminal Behavior*. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.

Romer, Daniel and Atika Khurana. 2015. “Brain Development and Risk Taking During Adolescence.” In Matt DeLisi and Michael G. Vaughn (eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Biosocial Criminology*, pp. 486–500. New York: Routledge.

Rothbart, Mary K. and John E. Bates. 1998. “Temperament.” In Nancy Eisenberg (ed.), *Handbook of Child Psychology*, Volume **3**: *Social, Emotional, and Personal Development*, pp. 105–176. New York: John Wiley.

Rowe, David C. 2002. *Biology and Crime*. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

Rudo-Hutt, Anna S., Jill Portnoy, Frances R. Chen, and Adrian Raine. 2015. “Biosocial Criminology as a Paradigm Shift.” In Matt DeLisi and Michael G. Vaughn (eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Biosocial Criminology*, pp. 22–31. New York: Routledge.

Rutter, Michael L. 1997. “Nature–Nurture Integration.” *American Psychologist* **52**: 390–398.

Rutter, Michael, Henri Giller, and Ann Hagell. 1998. *Antisocial Behavior by Young People*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Scarpa, Angela and Adrian Raine. 2007. “Biosocial Bases of Violence.” In Daniel J. Flannery, Alexander T. Vazsonyi, and Irwin. D. Waldman (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Violent Behavior and Aggression*, pp. 151–169. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Rutter, Michael, Terrie E. Moffitt, and Avshalom Caspi. 2006. “Gene-Environment Interplay and Psychopathology: Multiple Varieties But Real Effects.” *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* **47**: 226–261.

Schug, Robert A., Gianni G. Geraci, Gabriel Marmolejo, Heather L. McLernon, Leidy S. Partida, and Alexander J. Roberts. 2015. “Neuroimaging and Antisocial Behavior.” In Matt DeLisi and Michael G. Vaughn (eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Biosocial Criminology*, pp. 205–217. New York: Routledge.

Schwartz, Joseph A., Anthony Walsh, and Kevin M. Beaver. 2019. “The Biosocial Perspective: A Brief Overview and Potential Contributions to Criminological theory.” In Marvin D. Krohn, Nicole Hendrix, Gina Penly Hall, and Alan J. Lizotte (eds.), *Handbook on Crime and Deviance*, pp. 89–111. New York: Springer.

Séguin, Jean R., Linda Booij, and Scott O. Lilienfeld. 2018. “The Neuropsychology of Violence.” In Alexander T. Vazsonyi, Daniel J. Flannery, and Matt DeLisi (eds.), *Violent Behavior and Aggression,* pp. 136–158. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Silver, Eric. 2006. “Understanding the Relationship Between Mental Disorder and Violence: The Need for a Criminological Perspective.” *Law and Human Behavior* **30**: 685–706.

Simmons, Cortney, Zachary Rowan, Alissa Knowles, Laurence Steinberg, Paul J. Frick, and Elizabeth Cauffman. 2019. “A Life History Approach to Understanding Juvenile Offending and Aggression.” *Aggression and Violent Behavior* **49**: 1–12.

Simons, Ronald L., Man Kit Lei, Steven R. H. Beach, Gene H. Brody, Robert A. Philibert, and Frederick X. Gibbons. 2011. “Social Environment, Genes, and Aggression.” *American Sociological Review* **76**: 883–912.

Stogner, John M. 2015. “General Strain Theory and Biosocial Criminology.” In Kevin M. Beaver, J. C. Barnes, and Brian B. Boutwell (eds.), *The Nurture Versus Biosocial Debate in Criminology,* pp. 199–216. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Tellegen, Auke. 1985. “Structures of Mood and Personality and Their Relevance to Assessing Anxiety, with an Emphasis on Self-Report.” In A. Hussain Tuba and Jack Maser (eds.), *Anxiety and the Anxiety Disorders*, pp. 681–706. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Thornberry, Terence P. and Marvin D. Krohn. 2005. “Applying Interactional Theory to the Explanation of Continuity and Change in Antisocial Behavior.” In David P. Farrington (ed.), *Integrated Developmental and Life-Course Theories of Offending*, pp. 183–210. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Tibbetts, Stephen G. and Alex R. Piquero. 1999. “The Influence of Gender, Low Birth Weight, and Disadvantaged Environment in Predicting Early Onset of Offending: A Test of Moffitt’s Interactional Hypothesis.” *Criminology* **37**: 843–878.

Tuvblad, Catherine. 2015. “Genetic Influences on Antisocial Behavior over the Life-Course.” In Matt DeLisi and Michael G. Vaughn (eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Biosocial Criminology*, pp. 77–100. New York: Routledge.

Vaske, Jamie. 2015. “The Integration of Biological and Genetic Factors into Social Learning Theory.” In Kevin M. Beaver, J. C. Barnes, and Brian B. Boutwell (eds.), *The Nurture Versus Biosocial Debate in Criminology,* pp. 125–141. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Vaske, Jamie C. and Danielle L. Boisvert. 2015. “Stress and Antisocial Behavior.” In Matt DeLisi and Michael G. Vaughn (eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Biosocial Criminology*, pp. 128–143. New York: Routledge.

Vazsonyi, Alexander T., Joshua W. Roberts, and Li Huang. 2015. “Why Focusing on Nurture Made and Still Makes Sense.” In Matt DeLisi and Michael G. Vaughn (eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Biosocial Criminology*, pp. 263–280. New York: Routledge.

Wade, Terrance J. and John Cairney. 2006. “Sociological Contributions.” In Robert T. Ammerman (ed.), *Comprehensive Handbook of Personality and Psychopathology*, pp. 47–63. New York: John Wiley.

Wadsworth, M. E. J. 1976. “Delinquency, Pulse Rate, and Early Emotional Deprivation.” *British Journal of Criminology* **16**: 245–256.

Walsh, Anthony and Kevin M. Beaver, eds. 2009a. *Biosocial Criminology: New Directions in Theory and Research*. New York: Routledge.

____. 2009b. “Biosocial Criminology.” In Marvin D. Krohn, Alan J. Lizotte, and Gina Penly Hall, *Handbook on Crime and Deviance*, pp. 79–101. New York: Springer.

Walsh, Anthony, Charlene Y. Taylor, and Ilhong Yun. 2015. “The Role of Intelligence and Temperament in Interpreting the SES-Crime Relationship.” In Kevin M. Beaver, J. C. Barnes, and Brian B. Boutwell (eds.), *The Nurture Versus Biosocial Debate in Criminology,* pp. 91–106. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Wilson, James Q. and Richard J. Herrnstein. 1985. *Crime and Human Nature*. New York: Touchstone.

Winiarski, D. Anne, Erica L. Smearman, and Patricia A. Brennan. 2015. “Social Stress and the Gene-Environment Influences on Crime and Delinquency.” In Matt DeLisi and Michael G. Vaughn (eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Biosocial Criminology*, pp. 429–441. New York: Routledge.

Wright, Bradley R. Entner, Avshalom Caspi, Terrie E. Moffitt, and Phil A. Silva. 2001. “The Effects of Social Ties on Crime Vary by Crime Propensity: A Life-Course Model of Interdependence.” *Criminology* **39**: 321–352.

Wright, John Paul, J. C. Barnes, Brian B. Boutwell, Joseph A. Schwartz, Eric J. Connolly, Joseph L. Nedelec, and Kevin M. Beaver. 2015a. “Mathematical Proof Is Not Minutiae and Irreducible Complexity Is Not a Theory: A Final Response to Burt and Simons and a Call to Criminologists.” *Criminology* **53**: 113–120.

Wright, John P., Kevin M. Beaver, Matt DeLisi, Michael G. Vaughn, Danielle Boisvert, and Jamie Vaske. 2008a. “Lombroso’s Legacy: The Miseducation of Criminologists.” *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* **19**: 325–338.

Wright, John Paul, Jamie Newsome, and Michelle Coyne. 2015b. “Understanding Families from a Biosocial Perspective.” In Matt DeLisi and Michael G. Vaughn (eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Biosocial Criminology*, pp. 442–460. New York: Routledge.

Wright, John Paul, Stephen G. Tibbetts, and Leah E. Daigle. 2008b. *Criminals in the Making: Criminality Across the Life Course*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

40.
Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency*

Sheldon Glueck

Eleanor Glueck

The Gluecks begin their 1950 book Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency *by arguing that no one theoretical approach or disciplinary perspective is sufficient for studying the causes of delinquency. A full explanation of delinquency requires that factors from all disciplines be considered, including biological, psychological, and sociological factors. This "multifactor" approach guided their analysis in* Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency *and is one of the distinguishing features of their work. In particular, their list of causal factors includes variables from all domains —ranging from physique to temperamental traits to family factors. The reader may wonder, then, why their article is included in the section on biosocial and trait theories.*

Part of the response is that their study was published at a time when sociological theories were coming to dominate the discipline of criminology (see Laub and Sampson, 1991). Although the Gluecks's study focuses on factors from all domains, it assigns special importance to biological and psychological factors; the study stood out for this reason. With the exception of the family, the importance of social factors is discounted or not considered. For example, they argue that while delinquency is associated with school factors (e.g., low achievement, dislike of school) and association with delinquent peers, such factors do not have a causal effect on delinquency. Rather, they are simply another reflection of the individual traits and early family problems that cause delinquency.

The selection that follows summarizes the major findings from a study that the Gluecks began in 1939. The Gluecks compared 500 institutionalized delinquent boys in Massachusetts to a matched sample of 500 nondelinquent boys from the Boston area. The delinquents and nondelinquents were matched by age, race/ethnicity, neighborhood characteristics, and intelligence (the matching procedure helped ensure that the two groups were similar on these traits). The Gluecks then collected a wide range of data on these boys from several sources, and Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency *describes the results of their comparisons. They conclude that delinquency results from the interplay between somatic (physique), temperamental, intellectual, and sociocultural (especially family) forces. They do not describe the interactions between these factors in any detail, however.*

Their study has been critiqued on a number of points, and Sampson and Laub (1993) reanalyzed the Gluecks' data, partly in an effort to overcome many of these criticisms. Nevertheless, many of their findings have stood the test of time. Other findings, however, have been challenged. Certain data suggest that school factors and association with delinquent peers do have some causal impact on delinquency (see Agnew and Brezina, 2018; Vold et al., 2002; see also Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985).

References

Agnew, Robert and Timothy Brezina. 2018. *Juvenile Delinquency: Causes and Control*, 6th edition. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

Glueck, Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck. 1950. *Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency*. New York: The Commonwealth Fund.

Laub, John H. and Robert J. Sampson. 1991. "The Sutherland-Glueck Debate: On the Sociology of Criminological Knowledge." *American Journal of Sociology* **96**: 1402–1440.

Sampson, Robert J. and John H. Laub. 1993. *Crime in the Making*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Vold, George B., Thomas J. Bernard, and Jeffrey B. Snipes. 2002. *Theoretical Criminology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wilson, James Q. and Richard J. Herrnstein. 1985. *Crime and Human Nature*. New York: Touchstone.

By and large, examination of existing researches in juvenile delinquency discloses a tendency to emphasize a particular approach or explanation. Proponents of various theories of causation still too often insist that the truth is to be found only in their own special fields of study, and that, *ex hypothesi*, researches made by those working in other disciplines can contribute very little to the understanding and management of the crime problem. Like the blind men and the elephant of the fable, each builds the entire subject in the image of that piece of it which he happens to have touched.

Yet it stands to reason that since so little is as yet known about the intricacies of normal human behavior, it is the better part of wisdom not to be overawed by any branch of science or methodology to the neglect of other promising leads in the study of aberrant behavior. When, therefore, research into the causes of delinquency emphasizes the sociologic, or ecologic, or cultural, or psychiatric, or psychoanalytic, or anthropologic approach, relegating the others to a remote position, if not totally ignoring them, we must immediately be on guard. The problems of human motivation and behavior involve the study of man as well as society, of nature as well as nurture, of segments or mechanisms of human nature as well as the total personality, of patterns of intimate social activity as well as larger areas of social process or masses of culture. They involve, therefore, the participation of several disciplines. Without recognition of such factors, bias must weaken the validity of both method and interpretation.

For example, a weakness or an incompleteness of much sociologic reasoning on the causal process in crime is the assumption that the mass social stimulus to behavior, as reflected in the particular culture of a region, is alone, or primarily, the significant causal force. This presupposition ignores two undeniable facts: first, that in every society—whether largely rural or largely urban, whether agricultural or industrial, whether composed essentially of one ethnic group or of many or of a consistent culture or several clashing ones, whether existing at one historic period or another—there have been individuals who would not or could not conform to the taboos and laws prohibiting particular forms of behavior; second, and relatedly, that differences exist in the responses of various individuals or classes of persons to many of the elements in the culture-complex of a region.

As an illustration of the mass-culture approach to crime causation we may cite the studies of human ecology, the relation of neighborhood to human behavior, especially to delinquency. The numerous area-studies have revealed certain crude correlations between the gross physical make-up and composite culture of different zones of a city, on the one hand, and the incidence of delinquency and other aspects of social pathology, on the other. The most frequently quoted finding of these sociologic contributions is that there is a typical patterning of delinquency rates in different urban regions, the general trend of variation being from the highest rate in core-areas around central parts of cities and business districts to a lesser and lesser incidence in zones farther removed from the central section. The area of highest incidence of delinquency is also one of deterioration, in the sense that from a physical standpoint it is likely to be adjacent to industry and commerce and to be a neighborhood of dilapidated houses, dirty alleys, low rents, much poverty and dependency, and inadequate recreational facilities. From a cultural standpoint it is a place where the neighborhood has ceased to be an integrated and integrative agency of sentiments, values, behavior

standards, and social control; has drawn in peoples of differing and more or less conflicting mores, morals, and standards of behavior; has to some extent developed a tradition of delinquency; and has largely failed to furnish unifying and edifying substitutes for the crumbling traditional patterns of behavior and authority.

This kind of approach to the problem of delinquency, although of much aid in studying the phenomenon in the mass, is of relatively little help in exploring the mechanisms of causation. These mechanisms are operative, not in the external area or culture, but in the mental life of the individual, and in detail as well as en masse. The area-studies establish that a region of economic and cultural disorganization tends to have a criminogenic effect on people residing therein; but the studies fail to emphasize that this influence affects only a selected group comprising a relatively small proportion of all residents. They do not reveal why the deleterious influences of even the most extreme delinquency area fail to turn the great majority of its boys into persistent delinquents. They do not disclose whether the children who do not succumb to the evil and disruptive neighborhood influence differ from those who become delinquents and if so, in what respects. Until they take this factor into account, they cannot penetratingly describe even the culture of the delinquency area. For to say that certain bacteria have a fatal effect on some individuals but no such effect on the majority without describing the differently reacting persons or explaining the differential influences, is to describe that infective agent inadequately.

The true significance of the factors dealt with by the area sociologist can be determined only through close study of the points of impact of social forces upon individuals and classes of varying biologic make-up and childhood conditioning. The varieties of the physical, mental, and social history of different persons must determine, in large measure, the way in which they will be influenced by social disorganization, culture conflict, and the growing-pains of the city. To overemphasize the neighborhood matrix as a coherent whole and underemphasize or virtually ignore the biologic make-up and developmental history of the different human beings who themselves contribute to the modification of that matrix is to overlook many of the factors that account for variations in the effect of the culture on the human beings and thereby to distort reality with reference not only to the causal problem but even to the nature of the culture in question.

After presenting a great many studies showing the regional distribution of delinquency and stressing the influence of the disintegrating culture of the delinquency area on the behavior of its inhabitants, the ecologic sociologists are compelled to resort to psychologic insights when they come to grapple realistically with causal influences in the individual case. For example, Shaw's work, *The Natural History of a Delinquent Career*, begins with the familiar sociologic analysis of "A Delinquency Area." But it ends, significantly, with an analysis by a prominent ecologic sociologist employing such specific and individualized psychologic-psychiatric concepts as the precocious personality, the inferiority complex, and the difficult personality problem. The conclusion implied is that the delinquency area is after all not the major villain to be unmasked and coped with, but rather that the "personality type, as revealed in his [the individual boy's] autobiography, would require, if reformation is to be achieved, individualized treatment by a skilled and sympathetic person."

The same enthusiastic emphasis on a single approach to crime causation—this time involving the economic factor of poverty—is to be found in many European studies of crime and it has proved equally sterile and distorted without psychologic adjuncts. Since poverty operates differently on various types of persons, it should have been obvious that something more than the sociologic-economic datum of poverty (or unemployment, or the fluctuations in the price of some standard commodity, or the vicissitudes of the business cycle) had to be examined before the role of poverty in the genesis of delinquency or crime could be understood.

Unilateral study of the causes of delinquency and criminalism is not confined to some sociologists and economists. Such an approach has also existed on the part of proponents of various biologic theories. Lombroso's belated recognition of the operation of sociologic factors was submerged in his persistent enthusiasm for the theory that

crime is often the natural activity of persons destined from birth, by virtue of atavism (hereditary reversion or throwback to some remote ancestry), to become criminal. More recently, some enthusiastic endocrinologists have also made claims for the exclusiveness or primacy of glandular dysfunction as the causal agency in delinquency, without recognizing that any unilateral approach is a distortion of reality. Psychoanalytic explanations of delinquency are also inclined to an overemphasis of a single point of view; but the general acceptance of the role of early environmental conditioning upon the development of personality and character tends to make psychoanalysts recognize the importance of both biologic and cultural forces and of the interchanging influences of endowment and nurture in the genesis of maladapted behavior.

Other illustrations could be given of the tendency toward one-sided study of the causes of delinquency which springs from specialization in some particular science or method. But enough has been said to indicate that this is a pitfall which we have made every effort to avoid in the planning and execution of a research designed to throw light on the complexities of the causal process in delinquency.

---

* Reprinted from Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, *Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency*. Copyright © 1950 by Commonwealth Fund. Reprinted by permission of the Commonwealth Fund.

Need for Eclectic Approach to Study of Crime Causation

At the present stage of knowledge an eclectic approach to the study of the causal process in human motivation and behavior is obviously necessary. It is clear that such an inquiry should be designed to reveal meaningful integrations of diverse data from several levels of inquiry. There is need for a systematic approach that will not ignore any promising leads to crime causation, covering as many fields and utilizing as many of the most reliable and relevant techniques of investigation and measurement as are necessary for a fair sampling of the various aspects of a complex biosocial problem. Ideally, the focus in such a study should be upon the selectivity that occurs when environment and organism interact. The searchlight should be played upon the point of contact between specific social and biologic processes as they coalesce, accommodate, or conflict in individuals....

Dynamic Pattern of Delinquency

We have unraveled and laid out the separate strands of the tangled skein of causation. Here we shall see if we can reweave them into a meaningful pattern without leaving too many loose ends. If we are to isolate the probable causal factors, we must focus attention on the ones that differentiate the delinquents and nondelinquents and that were operative before delinquency became evident. Factors that come into play after persistent antisocial behavior is established can hardly be regarded as relevant to the original etiology of maladaptation, except as they may reflect deep-rooted forces which do not make themselves felt in a tendency to dissocial behavior until puberty or adolescence is reached....

Factors with Probable Causal Significance

We are now ready to focus attention on those factors that may have causal significance. It should be emphasized that in examining the tapestry of delinquency it is difficult to differentiate the warp of hereditary (genetic) factors from the woof of conditioned (environmental, cultural) factors. It is as yet too early to arrive at unassailable conclusions regarding the relative degrees of participation of biological and social factors in human behavior in general; and criminology, being a dependent discipline, must await the evidence of other sciences.

It is well nigh impossible to differentiate with assurance the completely innate from the completely acquired in the etiology of antisocial behavior. Birth injuries or anomalies of embryologic development may be confused with inherited conditions. Social inheritance may be mistaken for biologic. Certain inherited physical or mental traits may be confused with a "criminal instinct." The mechanisms of human heredity are as yet far from clear, especially where mental abnormalities are involved.

Nevertheless, our data do permit a rough division. There are, on the one hand, factors that are closer to the genetic than to the environmental end of the biosocial scale, and, on the other, those that are closer to the "conditioned," cultural end of the scale.

Physique

The data closest to the genetic are those dealing with the bodily morphology—the physique—of the two groups of boys under study. The most striking finding in the anthropologic analysis is the very high incidence of mesomorphic (muscular, solid) dominance in the body structure of the delinquents. Among the non-delinquents, on the other hand, there is a considerable incidence of ectomorphic (linear, thin) dominance. This basic difference in bodily morphology (the more subtle ones we are not at present bringing into the discussion) may reasonably be regarded as fundamentally related to differences in natural energy-tendencies.... *Thus, the delinquents, as a group, tend toward the outline of a solid, closely-knit, muscular type, one in which there is a relative predominance of muscle, bone, and connective tissue.* There may be contradictory, dysplastic components in individual instances, but the general tendency is mesomorphic. To the outlines of this solidly-structured, muscular, anatomical pattern derived by anthropologic analysis should now be added the evidence obtained from other sources, independently arrived at by other means. For example, a much higher proportion of the delinquents than of the non-delinquents are reported to have been extremely restless as young children in terms of energy output, and a considerably higher proportion of them were persistent enuretics. The health examination disclosed, by way of contrast, that neurologic handicaps and dermographia are less prevalent among the delinquents than among the control group.

Temperamental Traits and Emotional Dynamics

No direct statistical linkage between physique types and psychologic factors has been attempted here. It may be that when somatotypes are interrelated with temperament-types and character-types, meaningful associations will emerge. In the meantime, a general review of the traits of temperament and the emotional dynamics of the two groups permits us to make a rough association between the two orders of data. Let us consider, first, the dynamics of personality as disclosed by the Rorschach Test, which projects essentially subconscious materials. Such dynamics

involve both the impulsive tendencies and desires and the inhibiting apparatus. The delinquents have been found to be considerably more extroversive in their trends of action, more vivacious, more emotionally labile or impulsive (as opposed to stability of emotional expression), more destructive and sadistic, more aggressive and adventurous. Accompanying these more excessive dynamic emotional tendencies is the lesser self-control of the delinquents. Reviewing next what may be called emotional attitudes in contrast to dynamisms, it will be recalled that the delinquents have been found by the Rorschach Test to be more hostile, defiant, resentful, and suspicious than the non-delinquents. The delinquent group, further, contains a higher proportion of socially assertive boys; of boys who have a feeling of not being recognized or appreciated; and of boys characterized by oral trends (unconsciously motivated by a desire to be looked after without effort) and by narcissistic trends (reflecting a strong need for status, power, and superiority). They are also less conventional (as disclosed by both the Rorschach Test and the psychiatric interview), less cooperative, less inclined to meet the expectations of others, less dependent upon others, and far less submissive to authority or more ambivalent to it. To these traits can now be added others obtained through the psychiatric interview, which tend to support some of the findings from the deeper layers tapped by the Rorschach Test: The delinquents, as a group, are more stubborn and egocentric, less critical of themselves, and more sensual than the non-delinquents. They are far less conscientious, less practical and realistic, less aesthetic, and less "adequate." The psychiatric examination has also revealed that twice as many delinquents as non-delinquents evidence conflicts resulting from all sorts of environmental stresses.... In respect to feelings of physical or mental inferiority (largely the latter), in sexual identification, in the relationship between boy and father and between boy and mother, and in stress growing out of companionship, a consistently greater proportion of conflicts was found among the delinquents than among the non-delinquents.

It is, however, in the manner in which they typically resolve such conflicts that the distinction between the two groups under comparison weaves most meaningfully into the general pattern. More than twice as many delinquents tend to resolve mental conflicts by extroversion of action and/or feeling (largely the former); while, by way of contrast, eight times as many non-delinquents as delinquents tend to resolve their conflicts by introversion....

On the whole, the delinquents are more extroverted, vivacious, impulsive, and less self-controlled than the non-delinquents. They are more hostile, resentful, defiant, suspicious, and destructive. They are less fearful of failure or defeat than the non-delinquents. They are less concerned about meeting conventional expectations, and are more ambivalent toward or far less submissive to authority. They are, as a group, more socially assertive. To a greater extent than the control group, they express feelings of not being recognized or appreciated.

Intellectual Traits

The instruments of adaptive behavior are not only physiologic and affective but also intellectual. The findings in this area must therefore be woven into the total dynamic pattern. General intelligence in the two groups under comparison is of course similar, by virtue of the manner in which the boys were originally selected and matched. Still, certain differences in the constituents of intelligence have been found which, though separately not large, show quite a definite trend. First, the delinquents, as a group, are distinguished from the non-delinquents in having a lesser capacity to approach problems methodically. Such a trait possibly bears on the capacity to reflect on contemplated behavior and to assess its consequences. The delinquents have less verbal intelligence, scoring lower than the control group on the Vocabulary, Information, Comprehension, and Digit Symbol subtests of the Wechsler-Bellevue Scale. On the other hand, they attained a somewhat higher score on two out of five of the performance subtests, namely, Block Design and Object Assembly.... These findings seem to indicate that the delinquent group is made up of a somewhat greater variety of intelligence than the non-delinquent, despite the fact that the two groups were originally matched by intelligence quotient. Greater variability is also evident among the delinquents as

individuals in their responses to the verbal series of intelligence tests and their scores on the achievement tests in reading and arithmetic. This greater scatter may reflect greater emotional disharmony, which, in turn, affects intellectual tasks. *The delinquents tend to express themselves intellectually in a direct, immediate, and concrete manner rather than through the use of intermediate symbols or abstractions. There seems also to be a somewhat greater emotional disharmony connected with their performance of intellectual tasks*.

Behavior Reflecting Significant Traits

Certain forms of behavior, in and out of school, are in a sense not fundamentally etiologic. But since they reflect, at least partially, temperamental tendencies and character traits that have their roots in early childhood, they may be included in the general pattern. These forms of behavior are school attainment, school misbehavior, general misbehavior tendencies, use of leisure, and type of companions.

School Attainment

Although school attainment itself cannot be regarded as a causal factor, it nevertheless may reflect either temperamental and intellectual differences or variations in early environment and training. The school accomplishment of the delinquents was definitely inferior to that of the control group. (The reader is reminded that the boys were matched by age, and that they were of like age upon school entrance).... The poorer school achievement of the delinquent boys is reflected in their attitude toward schooling. Far more of them than of the non-delinquents markedly disliked school, and far fewer expressed any desire for education beyond grade school. To a much greater extent than the non-delinquents, they revealed themselves as misfits in the school situation. As a group, they were less interested in academic tasks, less attentive in class, more often tardy, less reliable, more careless in their work, lazier, more restless, less truthful, and they sought harder to attract attention to themselves. *Here again, we have strands of the delinquent pattern, namely, evidences of restless energy with accompanying difficulties in social adaptation and conformity to a regime of rules and discipline involving distasteful intellectual tasks.*

School Misbehavior

Probably bound up with somatic and temperamental traits, as well as with their home background, are the manifestations of maladaptive behavior displayed by the delinquents in school over the non-delinquents. (School misbehavior characterized almost all the delinquents, compared with less than a fifth of the control group.) The average age of the delinquents at first school misbehavior was nine and a half—fully three years younger than the mean age of the small number of non-delinquents when they showed the first evidences of any maladaptive behavior in school. At the time the delinquents were, on the average, in the fourth grade, and the non-delinquents in the seventh.

As to the nature of their misconduct, there is manifest, first, a very marked attempt on the part of the delinquents to escape from the burdensome restraints of the school regime by persistent truancy. Other kinds of school misconduct in which the delinquents greatly exceeded the non-delinquents (disobedience, disorderliness, stubbornness, sullenness, impertinence, defiance, and impudence) are to be expected in the light of the predominance of traits already noted. Although still other types of misconduct (quarrelsomeness, cruelty, domineering attitude, and destruction of school materials) involve relatively small numbers of boys, the delinquents considerably exceeded the non-delinquents in all of them.

Some manifestations of school misconduct may, of course, be essentially reactive; others seem to reflect root traits and fundamental drives. They all fit consistently, however, into the temperamental segment of the general pattern

that has been inductively achieved.

General Misbehavior Tendencies

As for the misbehavior tendencies of the two sets of boys outside of school, the delinquents, far more than the control group, were in the habit of stealing rides or hopping trucks, committing acts of destructive mischief, setting fires, sneaking into theatres without paying, running away from home, bunking out, and keeping late hours. They also gambled and begged, and a far greater proportion of them began to smoke or drink at a very early age. *In their general misbehavior tendencies, there is further evidence of a driving, uninhibited energy and thirst for adventure on the part of the delinquents.*

Leisure Time and Companions

Passing in review the findings regarding the leisure-time activities of the boys, we again see marked differences, which take their place significantly in the general pattern. Less than half as many of the delinquents as of the non-delinquents spent some of their leisure time at home. This may have resulted from the fact that far fewer of the delinquents' families indulged in family group recreations and also from the reluctance of the parents to entertain the boys' friends at home. The delinquents, far more than the non-delinquents, preferred to play in distant neighborhoods and to hang around street corners, vacant lots, waterfronts, railroad yards, and poolrooms. They expressed a much greater preference for adventurous activities. Perhaps that is why they gravitated toward the more exciting street trades in seeking after-school jobs. Apart from concrete outlets for restless energy, many more of them sought vicarious adventure through the movies.

As might be expected from the foregoing, the delinquents were less inclined to supervised recreational activities than the non-delinquents, and were also far less willing to spend any of their leisure hours in the circumscribed areas of playgrounds. This dislike of controlled environments may also be partially reflected in the far higher proportion of them who were neglectful of their church duties. In their choice of companions, also, they differed greatly from the control group. Almost all of them, in contrast to very few of the non-delinquents, preferred to chum with other delinquents. More than half of them, compared with less than one percent of the non-delinquents, were members of gangs. In far higher measure than the control group, their companions were older boys—possibly indicating a search for temperamentally congenial "ego-ideals."

In their recreational activities and companionship, the delinquents further evidence a craving for adventure and for opportunities to express aggressive energy-output, with the added need of supportive companionship in such activities. Thus far it seems clear that the physical, temperamental, intellectual, and behavioral segments of the inquiry tend to interweave into a meaningful pattern: The delinquents, far more than the non-delinquents, are of the essentially mesomorphic, energetic type, with tendencies to restless and uninhibited expression of instinctual-affective energy and to direct and concrete, rather than symbolic and abstract, intellectual expression. It is evidently difficult for them to develop the high degree of flexibility of adaptation, self-management, self-control, and sublimation of primitive tendencies and self-centered desires demanded by the complex and confused culture of the times. Nevertheless, there are some delinquents who do not fit into this pattern, either on a somatic or a temperamental level; and there are some non-delinquents who do.

Socio-Cultural Factors

An examination of socio-cultural factors should shed some light on the reasons for these difficulties of adaptation. Character is the result of training as well as of natural equipment. Mechanisms of sublimation and of constructive or harmless energy-canalization, as well as "knowledge of right and wrong," are part of the apparatus of character expression. However, a boy does not express himself in a vacuum, but in a cultural milieu ranging from the intimate, emotion-laden atmosphere of the home to that of the school, the neighborhood, and general society. Primitive tendencies are morally and legally neutral. It is the existence of laws and taboos that qualifies their expression in certain ways as delinquent, or criminal, or otherwise dissocial or anti-social from the point of view of the particular society and culture in question. Adaptation to the demands and prohibitions of any specific social organization requires certain physical, temperamental, and intellectual capacities dependent upon the values protected by that society through law and custom and characteristics of the cultural matrix.

Modern culture, especially in crowded urban centers, is highly complex, and it is ill-defined because of conflicting values. The demands upon the growing human organism by every vehicle of today's culture are numerous, often subtle, and sometimes inconsistent. This is true of the home, the school, the neighborhood, and the general, all-pervasive culture of the times. Against insistence that he be honest, nonaggressive, self-controlled, and the like, the child soon finds vivid contradicting attitudes, values, and behavior all about him in an environment that in large measure rewards selfishness, aggression, a predatory attitude, and success by any means. Thus, the demands made upon the growing child at every level at which he is called upon to adapt his natural inclinations to the taboos, laws, and other prohibitions are neither simple nor well defined. They require a great deal of adaptive power, self-control, and self-management, the ability to choose among alternative values and to postpone immediate satisfactions for future ones—all this in a cultural milieu in which fixed points are increasingly difficult to discern and to hold to. This means that during the earliest years, when the difficult task of internalization of ideals and symbols of authority is in process, desirable attitudes and behavior standards are not clearly enough defined, or are inconsistent, leaving a confused residue in the delicate structure of personality and character.

While responses to the complex modern culture differ with the varying constitution and temperament of each person subjected to it, the basic desires of the growing child, especially as he emerges into adolescence, are similar and imperative. Clinical experience has shown that among these are the striving for happiness and for expression of a desire for freedom from restraint; the thirst for new experience and for the satisfaction of curiosity; the need for an assured feeling of security and affectional warmth from parents, other adults whom the child admires, and companions; the desire to achieve a feeling of success and status.

How did the home conditions of the delinquents and non-delinquents in this study tend to facilitate or hamper the process of internalization of authority, the taming and sublimation of primitive impulses, and the definition of standards of good and bad? To answer this significant question requires, first, a review of the findings concerning the background of the parents of the boys; for the parents are not only the products of the biologic and cultural systems in which they were born and reared, but also the transmitters of that biosocial heritage to their children. We found that while the divergencies between the delinquents and non-delinquents were sometimes not as marked as those found in other aspects of the research, *the biosocial legacy of the parents of the delinquents was consistently poorer than that of the non-delinquents*. There was a greater incidence of emotional disturbances, mental retardation, alcoholism, and criminalism among the families of the mothers of the delinquents. These differences existed despite the fact that the economic condition of the homes in which the mothers of the delinquent boys had been reared was not very different from that of the homes in which the mothers of the non-delinquents grew up. In the families of the fathers of the delinquents, also, there was more emotional disturbance and criminalism than among the families of the fathers of the non-delinquents.

Thus, to the extent that the parents of the boys communicated the standards and ideals of their own rearing to that of their children, it is evident that the social—and perhaps, partially also, biologic—legacy of the delinquents was worse than that of the non-delinquents.

As for the parents themselves, their biosocial handicaps should be considered as at least partly influencing their capacity to rear their children properly. A higher proportion of the parents of the delinquents suffered from serious physical ailments, were mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, alcoholic, and—most significant—many more of them had a history of delinquency.

The generally poorer hygienic and moral climate in which the delinquents were reared is further emphasized in the greater burden among their brothers and sisters of serious physical ailments, mental retardation, emotional disturbances, excessive drinking, and delinquency.

These are not the only ways in which the familial background of the delinquents was less adequate than that of the non-delinquents. There are other aspects of family life in which the delinquents were more deprived, often markedly so. For example: A somewhat higher proportion of their parents than of the parents of the non-delinquents came to the responsibilities of marriage with no more than grade-school education. A far higher proportion of the marriages proved to be unhappy. More of the homes of the delinquents were broken by desertion, separation, divorce, or death of one or both parents, many of the breaches occurring during the early childhood of the boys. Because of this, many more delinquents than non-delinquents have had substitute parents, and more of them were shifted about from one household to another during their formative years. Further, there has been less of an effort among the families of the delinquent group to set up decent standards of conduct—less ambition, less self-respect, and less planning for the future.

As for the economic status of the two groups of families, a finding has emerged which is particularly significant in view of the fact that the boys were matched at the outset on the basis of residence in underprivileged areas, namely, that sporadic or chronic dependency has been markedly more prevalent among the families of the delinquents. This is attributable, at least in part, to the far poorer work habits of the fathers, and in part also to less planful management of the family income.

These differences between the families of the delinquents and the families of the non-delinquents do not so much pertain to the obvious issue of the relationship of dependence or poverty to crime (the vast majority of both groups of families are of the underprivileged class); they are important, rather, as reflecting the differences in the quality of the adults in the families and therefore the variance in influence on the children.

The greater inadequacy of the parents of the delinquents is also reflected in the extremes of laxity and harshness with which they attempted to meet the disciplinary problems of their children and in the greater carelessness of their supervision of the children, amounting often to outright neglect.

It is, however, within the family emotional setting—the family drama—that the most deep-rooted and persistent character and personality traits and distortions of the growing child are developed.

We may at once dispose of the claim often made that being the only or the firstborn, or the youngest child has special implications for delinquency. The fact is that, in our study, a *lower* proportion of the delinquents than of the non-delinquents were so placed in order of birth.

In interpersonal family relationships, however, we found an exceedingly marked difference between the two groups under comparison. A much higher proportion of the families of the delinquents were disorganized (not cohesive). Family disorganization, with its attendant lack of warmth and of respect for the integrity of each member, can have

serious consequences for the growing child. It may prevent the development of both an adequate sense of responsibility and an effective mechanism for the inhibition of conduct that might disgrace the family name. Since the family is the first and foremost vehicle for the transmission of the values of a culture to the young child, non-cohesiveness of the family may leave him without ethical moorings or convey to him a confused and inconsistent cultural pattern.

Apart from the lesser cohesiveness of the families in which the delinquents grew up, many more of their fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters have been indifferent or frankly hostile to the boys. A far *lower* proportion of the delinquents than of the non-delinquents have been affectionately attached to their parents; and considerably more of them have felt that their parents have not been concerned about their welfare. Finally, twice as many of the delinquents do not look upon their fathers as acceptable symbols for emulation.

These far-spread and marked differences cannot be attributable only to cultural inequalities in the two groups. Culture does not originate or operate in a vacuum. It is made, modified, and transmitted by human beings. The greater criminalism of the antecedents of the delinquent group, for example, cannot be attributed to a cultural tradition of lawlessness in these families, but must have sprung from individuals whose physical and psychologic equipment inclined them to select the antisocial culture as opposed to the conventional, or who found the former more congenial to their biologic tendencies.

In the light of the obvious inferiority of the families of the delinquents as sources of sound personality development and character formation, it is not surprising that these boys were never adequately socialized, and that they developed persistent antisocial tendencies, even apart from the fundamental somatic and temperamental differentiations between them and the non-delinquents.

Without attempting a psychoanalytic discussion of interpersonal emotional dynamics, we may point out that the development of a mentally hygienic and properly oriented superego (conscience) must have been greatly hampered by the kind of parental ideals, attitudes, temperaments, and behavior found to play such a major role on the family stage of the delinquents.

The Causal Complex

It will be observed that in drawing together the more significant threads of each area explored, we have not resorted to a theoretical explanation from the standpoint, exclusively, of any one discipline. It has seemed to us, at least at the present stage of our reflections upon the materials, that it is premature and misleading to give exclusive or even primary significance to any one of the avenues of interpretation. On the contrary, the evidence seems to point to the participation of forces from several areas and levels in channeling the persistent tendency to socially unacceptable behavior. The foregoing summation of the major resemblances and dissimilarities between the two groups included in the present inquiry indicates that the separate findings, independently gathered, integrate into a dynamic pattern which is neither exclusively biologic nor exclusively socio-cultural, but which derives from an interplay of somatic, temperamental, intellectual, and socio-cultural forces.

We are impelled to such a multidimensional interpretation because, without it, serious gaps appear. If we resort to an explanation exclusively in terms of somatic constitution, we leave unexplained why most persons of mesomorphic tendency do *not* commit crimes; and we further leave unexplained how bodily structure affects behavior. If we limit ourselves to a socio-cultural explanation, we cannot ignore the fact that socio-cultural forces are selective; even in underprivileged areas most boys do *not* become delinquent and many boys from such areas do not develop into persistent offenders. And, finally, if we limit our explanation to psychoanalytic theory, we fail to account for the fact that the great majority of non-delinquents, as well as of delinquents, show traits usually deemed unfavorable to sound character development, such as vague feelings of insecurity and feelings of not being wanted; the fact that many boys who live under conditions in which there is a dearth of parental warmth and understanding nevertheless remain non-delinquent; and the fact that some boys, under conditions unfavorable to the development of a wholesome superego, do not become delinquents, but do become neurotics.

If, however, we take into account the dynamic interplay of these various levels and channels of influence, a tentative causal formula or law emerges, which tends to accommodate these puzzling divergencies so far as the great mass of delinquents is concerned:

The delinquents as a group are distinguishable from the non-delinquents: (1) physically, *in being essentially mesomorphic in constitution (solid, closely knit, muscular);* (2) temperamentally, *in being restlessly energetic, impulsive, extroverted, aggressive, destructive (often sadistic)—traits which may be related more or less to the erratic growth pattern and its physiologic correlates or consequences;* (3) in attitude, *by being hostile, defiant, resentful, suspicious, stubborn, socially assertive, adventurous, unconventional, non-submissive to authority;* (4) psychologically, *in tending to direct and concrete, rather than symbolic, intellectual expression, and in being less methodical in their approach in problems;* (5) socio-culturally, *in having been reared to a far greater extent than the control group in homes of little understanding, affection, stability, or moral fibre by parents usually unfit to be effective guides and protectors, or, according to psychoanalytic theory, desirable sources for emulation and the construction of a consistent, well-balanced, and socially normal superego during the early stages of character development*. While in individual cases the stresses contributed by any one of the above pressure-areas of dissocial-behavior tendency may adequately account for persistence in delinquency, in general the high probability of delinquency is dependent upon the interplay of the conditions and forces from all these areas.

In the exciting, stimulating, but little-controlled and culturally inconsistent environment of the underprivileged area, such boys readily give expression to their untamed impulses and their self-centered desires by means of

various forms of delinquent behavior. Their tendencies toward uninhibited energy-expression are deeply anchored in soma and psyche and in the malformations of character during the first few years of life….

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Many of the theories described in this reader argue that crime and delinquency are caused by the social environment—by one's family and friends, social class position, neighborhood characteristics, etc. Being as specific as you can in your response, why would the Gluecks criticize such approaches?
2. Drawing on the Gluecks, describe the individual traits and social environment that characterized the delinquents in their sample.
3. Even though delinquents are more likely than nondelinquents to do poorly at school and experience other school problems, the Gluecks argue that school factors do not cause delinquency. Why do they make this argument?

41.
Biological Explanations of Criminal Behavior*

Shichun Ling

Rebecca Umbach

Adrian Raine

This chapter will make you aware of how far biological theories of crime have come since Lombroso (Chapter 2 in Part I), who focused on the gross physical features of the person and devoted little attention to the mechanisms by which these features might contribute to crime. The chapter provides an overview of the biological factors that impact crime, with a focus on psychophysiology (levels of arousal), the brain, and genetics. The authors make the point that biological factors affect crime through their impact on traits conducive to crime, such as fearlessness, impulsivity, and sensation seeking. Further, biological factors are intimately related to the social environment. Poor nutrition and child maltreatment, for example, may affect brain development and functioning. And biological and social factors may interact in their effect on crime. Certain genetic characteristics, for example, appear more likely to affect crime among children who have been maltreated. At the same time, the authors note that one should be cautious when examining the effect of biological factors on crime, since the effect may differ by type of crime (e.g., proactive vs. reactive aggression) and type of offender (successful psychopaths and white-collar offenders vs. unsuccessful [convicted] psychopaths).

A growing body of literature has indicated the importance of considering neurobiological factors in the etiology of antisocial and criminal behavior. Behaviors, including criminality, are the result of complex, reciprocally influential interactions between an individual's biology, psychology, and the social environment (Focquaert, 2018). As research progresses, the misconception that biology can predetermine criminality is being rectified. Elucidating the biological underpinnings of criminal behavior and broader, related outcomes such as antisocial behavior can provide insights into relevant etiological mechanisms. This selective review discusses three biological factors that have been examined in relation to antisocial and criminal behavior: psychophysiology, brain, and genetics.

---

* Reprinted with permission from: Ling, Shichun, Rebecca Umbach, and Adrian Raine. 2019. "Biological explanations of criminal behavior." *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 25: 626–640.

Psychophysiology

Psychophysiology, or the levels of arousal within individuals, has become an important biological explanation for antisocial and criminal behavior. Two common psychophysiological measures are heart rate and skin conductance (i.e., sweat rate). Both capture autonomic nervous system functioning; skin conductance reflects sympathetic nervous system functioning while heart rate reflects both sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system activity. Blunted autonomic functioning has been associated with increased antisocial behavior, induding violence (Baker et al., 2009; Choy, Farrington, & Raine, 2015; Gao, Raine, Venables, Dawson, & Mednick, 2010; Portnoy & Farrington, 2015). Longitudinal studies have found low resting heart rate in adolescence to be associated with increased risk for criminality in adulthood (Latvala, Kuja-Halkola, Almqvist, Larsson, & Lichtenstein, 2015; Raine, Venables, & Williams, 1990). However, there is likely a positive feedback loop whereby blunted autonomic functioning may lead to increased antisocial/criminal behavior, which in turn may reinforce disrupted physiological activity. For example, males and females who exhibited high rates of proactive aggression (an instrumental, predatory form of aggression elicited to obtain a goal or reward) in early adolescence were found to have poorer skin conductance fear conditioning in late adolescence (Gao, Tuvblad, Schell, Baker, & Raine, 2015; Vitiello & Stoff, 1997).

Theories have been proposed to explain how blunted autonomic functioning could increase antisociality. The fearlessness hypothesis suggests that antisocial individuals, due to their blunted autonomic functioning, are not deterred from criminal behavior because they do not experience appropriate physiological responses to risky or stressful situations nor potential aversive consequences (Portnoy et al., 2014; Raine, 2002). Alternatively, the sensation-seeking hypothesis suggests that blunted psychophysiology is an uncomfortable state of being, and in order to achieve homeostasis, individuals engage in antisocial behavior to raise their arousal levels (Portnoy et al., 2014; Raine, 2002).

Another mechanism that could connect disrupted autonomic functioning to antisocial behavior is the failure to cognitively associate physiology responses with emotional states. Appropriately linking autonomic conditions to emotional states is important in socialization processes such as fear conditioning, which is thought to contribute to the development of a conscience. The somatic marker hypothesis (Bechara & Damasio, 2005) suggests that 'somatic markers' (e.g., sweaty palms) may reflect emotional states (e.g., anxiety) that can inform decision-making processes. Impairments in autonomic functioning could lead to risky or inappropriate behavior if individuals are unable to experience or label somatic changes and connect them to relevant emotional experiences. Indeed, psychopathic individuals exhibit somatic aphasia (i.e. the inaccurate identification and recognition of one's bodily state; Gao, Raine, & Schug, 2012). Moreover, blunted autonomic functioning impairs emotional intelligence, subsequently increasing psychopathic traits (Ling, Raine, Gao, & Schug, 2018a). Impaired autonomic functioning and reduced emotional intelligence may impede the treatment of psychopathy (Polaschek & Skeem, 2018) and disrupt development of moral emotions such as shame, guilt, and empathy (Eisenberg, 2000). Such moral dysfunction, a strong characteristic of psychopaths, may contribute to their disproportionate impact on the criminal justice system (Kiehl & Hoffman, 2011).

While there is evidence that antisocial/criminal individuals typically exhibit abnormal psychophysiological functioning, it is important to acknowledge that there are different antisocial/criminal subtypes, and they may not share the same deficits. Whereas individuals who are high on proactive aggression may be more likely to exhibit blunted autonomic functioning, individuals who are high on reactive aggression (an affective form of aggression that is elicited as a response to perceived provocation) may be more likely to exhibit hyperactive autonomic functioning

(Hubbard, McAuliffe, Morrow, & Romano, 2010; Vitiello & Stoff, 1997). This may have implications for different types of offenders, with elevated autonomic functioning presenting in reactively aggressive individuals who engage in impulsive crimes and blunted autonomic functioning presenting in proactively aggressive offenders engaging in more premediated crimes. Similarly, psychopaths who are 'unsuccessful' (i.e., convicted criminal psychopaths) exhibit reduced heart rate during stress while those who are 'successful' (i.e., non-convicted criminal psychopaths) exhibit autonomic functioning similar to non-psychopathic controls (Ishikawa, Raine, Lencz, Bihrle, & LaCasse, 2001). Despite differences among subgroups, dysfunctional autonomic functioning generally remains a reasonably well-replicated and robust correlate of antisocial and criminal behavior.

Brain

There has been increasing interest in the role of the brain in antisocial/criminal behavior. In general, research suggests that antisocial/criminal individuals tend to exhibit reduced brain volumes as well as impaired functioning and connectivity in key areas related to executive functions (Alvarez & Emory, 2006; Meijers, Harte, Meynen, & Cuijpers, 2017; Morgan & Lilienfeld, 2000), emotion regulation (Banks, Eddy, Angstadt, Nathan, & Phan, 2007; Eisenberg, 2000), decision-making (Coutlee & Huettel, 2012; Yechiam et al., 2008), and morality (Raine & Yang, 2006) while also exhibiting increased volumes and functional abnormalities in reward regions of the brain (Glenn & Yang, 2012; Korponay et al., 2017). These prefrontal and subcortical regions that have been implicated in antisocial/criminal behavior are the selective focus of this review.

Prefrontal Cortex

Conventional criminal behavior has typically been associated with prefrontal cortex (PFC) structural aberrations and functional impairments (Brower & Price, 2001; Yang & Raine, 2009). The PFC is considered the seat of higher-level cognitive processes such as decision-making, attention, emotion regulation, impulse control, and moral reasoning (Sapolsky, 2004). In healthy adults, larger prefrontal structures have been associated with better executive functioning (Yuan & Raz, 2014). However, structural deficits and functional impairments of the PFC have been observed in antisocial and criminal individuals, suggesting that PFC aberrations may underlie some of the observed behaviors.

While many studies on brain differences related to criminal behavior have consisted of correlational analyses, lesion studies have provided some insight into causal neural mechanisms of antisocial/criminal behavior. The most well-known example of the effects of prefrontal lobe lesions is the case of Phineas Gage, who was reported to have a dramatic personality change after an iron rod was shot through his skull and damaged his left and right prefrontal cortices (Damasio, Grabowski, Frank, Galaburda, & Damasio, 1994; Harlow, 1848, 1868). Empirical studies suggest that prefrontal lesions acquired earlier in life disrupt moral and social development (Anderson, Bechara, Damasio, Tranel, & Damasio, 1999; Taber-Thomas et al., 2014). A study of 17 patients who developed criminal behavior following a brain lesion documented that while these lesions were in different locations, they were all connected functionally to regions activated by moral decisionmaking (Darby, Horn, Cushman, & Fox, 2018), suggesting that disruption of a neuromoral network is associated with criminality. Nevertheless, while lesion studies have implicated specific brain regions in various psychological processes such as moral development, generalizability is limited because of the heterogeneity of lesion characteristics, as well as subjects' characteristics that may moderate the behavioral effects of the lesion.

In recent years, non-invasive neural interventions such as transcranial magnetic stimulation and transcranial electric stimulation have been used to manipulate activity within the brain to provide more direct causal evidence of the functions of specific brain regions with regard to behavior. These techniques involve subthreshold modulation of neuronal resting membrane potential (Nitsche & Paulus, 2000; Woods et al., 2016). Using transcranial electric stimulation, upregulation of the PFC has been found to decrease criminal intentions and increase perceptions of moral wrongfulness of aggressive acts (Choy, Raine, & Hamilton, 2018), providing support for the causal influence of the PFC on criminal behavior.

Importantly, there is evidence of heterogeneity within criminal subgroups. Successful psychopaths and white-collar offenders do not seem to display these prefrontal deficits (Raine et al., 2012; Yang et al., 2005). While unsuccessful psychopaths exhibit reduced PFC gray matter volume compared to successful psychopaths and non-offender controls, there are no prefrontal gray matter volume differences between successful psychopaths and non-offender controls (Yang et al., 2005). Similarly, while prefrontal volume deficits have been found in conventional criminals (i.e., blue-collar offenders), white-collar offenders do not exhibit frontal lobe reductions (Brower & Price, 2001; Ling et al., 2018b; Raine et al., 2012) and in fact may exhibit increased executive functioning compared to blue-collar controls (Raine et al., 2012). Lastly, antisocial offenders with psychopathy exhibited reduced gray matter volumes in the prefrontal and temporal poles compared to antisocial offenders without psychopathy and non-offenders (Gregory et al., 2012). It is therefore important to acknowledge that there are various types of antisocial and criminal behavior that may have different neurobiological etiologies.

Amygdala

The amygdala is an important brain region that has been implicated in emotional processes such as recognition of facial and auditory expressions of emotion, especially for negative emotions such as fear (Fine & Blair, 2000; Murphy, Nimmo-Smith, & Lawrence, 2003; Sergerie, Chochol, & Armony, 2008). Normative amygdala functioning has been thought to be key in the development of fear conditioning (Knight, Smith, Cheng, Stein, & Helmstetter, 2004; LaBar, Gatenby, Gore, LeDoux, & Phelps, 1998; Maren, 2001), and appropriate integration of the amygdala and PFC has been argued to underlie the development of morality (Blair, 2007). The amygdala is thought to be involved in stimulus-reinforcement learning that associates actions that harm others with the aversive reinforcement of the victims' distress and in recognizing threat cues that typically deter individuals from risky behavior. However, amygdala maldevelopment can lead to a diminished ability to recognize distress or threat cues; disrupting the stimulus-reinforcement learning that discourages antisocial/ criminal behavior (Blair, 2007; Sterzer, 2010). Indeed, while reduced amygdala volume in adulthood has been associated with increased aggressive and psychopathic characteristics from childhood to early adulthood, it is also associated with increased risk for future antisocial and psychopathic behavior (Pardini, Raine, Erickson, & Loeber, 2014).

Although the amygdala has been implicated in criminal behavior, there may be important differences between subtypes of offenders. Whereas psychopathic antisocial individuals may be more likely to exhibit cold, calculating forms of aggression, non-psychopathic antisocial individuals may be more likely to engage in impulsive, emotionaily-reactive aggression (Glenn & Raine, 2014). Research suggests the former may exhibit amygdala hypoactivity and the latter, amygdala hyperactivity (Raine, 2018a). Indeed, violent offenders have been found to exhibit increased amygdala reactivity in response to provocations (da Cunha-Bang et al., 2017). Spousal abusers have also been found to exhibit increased amygdala activation when responding to aggressive words compared to nonabusers (Lee, Chan, & Raine, 2008). In a community sample of healthy adults, psychopathy scores were negatively related to amygdala reactivity while antisocial personality disorder scores were positively associated with amygdala reactivity after adjusting for overlapping variance between psychopathy and antisocial personality disorder (Hyde, Byrd, Votruba-Brzal, Hariri, & Manuck, 2014). Nevertheless, more research is needed to determine whether the presence of callous-unemotional traits (e.g., lack of guilt; Lozier, Cardinale, VanMeter, & Marsh, 2014; Viding et al., 2012) or severity of antisocial behavioral traits (Dotterer, Hyde, Swartz, Hariri, & Williamson, 2017; Hyde et al., 2016) are most relevant to the observed amygdala hypo-reactivity.

Striatum

The striatum has recently garnered more attention as a region that could be implicated in the etiology of criminal behavior because of its involvement in reward and emotional processing (Davidson & Irwin, 1999; Glenn & Yang, 2012). Dysfunction in the striatum has been hypothesized to be a neural mechanism that underlies the impulsive/antisocial behavior of criminals. Indeed, individuals with higher impulsive/antisocial personality traits have been found to exhibit increased activity in the striatum (Bjork, Chen, & Hommer, 2012; Buckholtz et al., 2010; Geurts et al., 2016). Psychopathic individuals, compared to non-psychopathic individuals, demonstrate a 9.6% increase in striatal volumes (Glenn, Raine, Yaralian, & Yang, 2010). Moreover, striatal enlargement and abnormal functional connectivity of the striatum has specifically been associated with the impulsive/antisocial dimension of psychopathy (Korponay et al., 2017), suggesting this dimension of psychopathy is related to reward processes (Hare, 2017).

While much of the literature on striatal abnormalities in antisocial individuals has focused on psychopathic individuals, there is some evidence that offenders in general exhibit striatal abnormalities. Increased volume (Schiffer et al., 2011) and increased reactivity to provocations (da Cunha-Bang et al., 2017) have both been found in violent offenders as compared to non-offendersMoreover, weak cortico-striatal connectivity has been associated with increased frequency of criminal convictions (Hosking et al., 2017). In contrast, one study found reduced striatal activity to be associated with antisocial behavior (Murray, Shaw, Forbes, & Hyde, 2017). While more research is needed, current literature suggests that striatal deviations are linked to criminal behavior. One important consideration for future studies is to determine a consistent operationalization for the striatum, as some studies examine the *dorsal striatum* (i.e., putamen and caudate; Yang et al., 2015), others assess the *corpus striatum* (i.e., putamen, caudate, and globus pallidus; Glenn et al., 2010), and still others analyze the role of the *ventral striatum* (i.e., nucleus accumbens and olfactory tubercle; Glenn & Yang, 2012) in relation to antisocial/criminal behavior.

Genetics

There is increasing evidence for a genetic basis of antisocial/criminal behavior. Behavioral genetic studies of twins and adoptees have been advantageous because such designs can differentiate the effects of genetics and environment within the context of explaining variance within a population (Glenn & Raine, 2014). Additionally, a variety of psychological and psychiatric constructs associated with antisociality/criminality, such as intelligence, personality, and mental health disorders, have been found to be heritable (Baker, Bezdjian, & Raine, 2006). While individual study estimates vary, meta-analyses have suggested the level of heritability of antisocial behavior is approximately 40–60% (Raine, 2013). Shared environmental factors have been estimated to explain approximately 11–14% of the variance in antisocial/criminal behavior and non-shared environmental influences approximately 31–37% (Ferguson, 2010; Gard, Dotterer, & Hyde, 2019). However, the heritability of antisocial/criminal behaviors vary in part based upon the specific behaviors examined (Burt, 2009; Gard et al., 2019).

Inspired by prominent theories of the neurobiology of aggression, there have been several candidate genes implicated in the serotonergic and catecholaminergic neurobio-logical systems that have been examined in relation to antisocial/criminal behavior (Tiihonen et al., 2015). However, a meta-analysis of genetic variants related to antisocial/criminal behavior yielded null results at the 5% significance level (Vassos, Collier, & Fazel, 2014). Nevertheless, genes do not operate in isolation, thus it is important to consider the context in which genes are activated.

Gene-environment (G x E) interactions have garnered increasing attention over the years, as these can increase risk for antisocial behavior and/or produce epigenetic changes within individuals. Longitudinal studies and meta-analyses have documented the moderating effect of the monoamine oxidase A (MAOA) gene on the relationship between maltreatment and antisocial behaviors, with the maltreatment-antisocial behavior relationship being stronger for individuals with low MAOA than high MAOA (Byrd & Manuck, 2014; Caspi et al., 2002; Fergusson, Boden, & Horwood, 2011; Kim-Cohen et al., 2006). Similarly, in a large study of African-American females, having the A1 allele of the DRD2 gene or a criminal father did not individually predict antisocial outcomes, but having both factors increased risk for serious delinquency, violent delinquency, and police contacts (Delisi, Beaver, Vaughn, & Wright, 2009). This type of G x E interaction reflects how genotypes can influence individuals' sensitivity to environmental stressors. However, there may be important subgroup differences to consider when examining genetic risk for criminal behavior. For example, low-MAOA has been associated with higher risk for violent crime in incarcerated Caucasian offenders but not incarcerated non-Caucasian offenders (Stetler et al., 2014). Additionally, high-MAOA may protect abused and neglected Caucasians from increased risk of becoming violent or antisocial, but this buffering effect was not found for abused and neglected non-Caucasians (Widom & Brzustowicz, 2006). Thus, while the MAOA gene has been associated with anti-social/criminal behavior, there are still nuances of this relationship that should be considered (Goldman & Rosser, 2014).

Another way in which G x E interactions manifest themselves is when environmental stressors result in epigenetic changes, thus becoming embedded in biology that result in long-term symptomatic consequences. For example, females exposed to childhood sex abuse have exhibited alterations in the methylation of the *5HTT* promoter region, which in turn has been linked to subsequent antisocial personality disorder symptoms (Beach, Brody, Todorov, Gunter, & Philibert, 2011). There has been a growing body of work on such epigenetic mechanisms involved in the biological embedding of early life stressors and transgenerational trauma (Kellermann, 2013; Provencal & Binder,

2015). Thus, just as biological mechanisms can influence environmental responses, environmental stressors can affect biological expressions.

While genes may interact with the environment to produce antisocial/criminal outcomes, they can also interact with other genes. There is evidence that dopamine genes DRD2 and DRD4 may interact to increase criminogenic risk (Beaver et al., 2007; Boutwell et al., 2014). The effect of the 7-repeat allele DRD4 is strengthened in the presence of the A1 allele of DRD2, and has been associated with increased odds of committing major theft, burglary, gang fighting, and conduct disorder (Beaver et al., 2007; Boutwell et al., 2014). However, there is some evidence that DRD2 and DRD4 do not significantly affect delinquency abstention for females (Boutwell & Beaver, 2008). Thus there may be demographic differences that moderate the effect of genetic interactions on various antisocial outcomes (Dick, Adkins, & Kuo, 2016; Ficks & Waldman, 2014; Rhee & Waldman, 2002; Salvatore & Dick, 2018), and such differences warrant further research.

Interactions Between Biological Factors

Importantly, biological correlates of antisocial and criminal behavior are inextricably linked in dynamical systems, in which certain processes influence others through feedback loops. While a detailed summary is beyond the scope of this review, some interactions between biological mechanisms are briefly illustrated here. Within the brain, the PFC and amygdala have reciprocal connections, with the PFC often conceptualized as monitoring and regulating amygdala activity (Gillespie, Brzozowski, & Mitchell, 2018). Disruption of PFC-amyg-dala connectivity has been linked to increased antisocial/criminal behavior, typically thought to be due to the impaired top-down regulation of amygdala functioning by the PFC. Similarly, the brain and autonomic functioning are linked (Critchley, 2005; Wager et al., 2009); output from the brain can generate changes in autonomic functioning by affecting the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis, but autonomic functions also provide input to the brain that is essential for influencing behavioral judgments and maintaining coordinated regulation of bodily functions (Critchley, 2005). While not comprehensive, these examples illustrate that biological systems work together to produce behavior.

Implications

While biological processes can contribute to antisocial/criminal behavior, these do not guarantee negative outcomes. Considering that many of the aforementioned biological risk factors are significantly influenced by social environment, interventions in multiple spheres may help mitigate biological risks for antisocial behavior.

With regard to psychophysiological correlates of antisocial behavior, research suggests differential profiles of arousal impairment depending on the type of antisocial behavior (Hubbard et al., 2010; Vitiello & Stoff, 1997). Treatments designed to address the issues associated with psychophysiological differences are typically behavioral in nature, targeted at associated symptoms. Studies of mindfulness have suggested its utility in improving autonomic functioning (Delgado-Pastor, Perakakis, Subramanya, Telles, & Vila, 2013) and emotion regulation (Umbach, Raine, & Leonard, 2018), which may better help individuals with reactive aggression and hyperarousal. Hypo-arousal has been associated with impaired emotional intelligence (Ling et al., 2018a), but emotional intelligence training programs have shown some promise in reducing aggression and increasing empathy among adolescents and increasing emotional intelligence among adults (Castillo, Salguero, Fernandez-Berrocal, & Balluerka, 2013; Hodzic, Scharfen, Ropoll, Holling, & Zenasni, 2018), and in reducing recidivism (Megreya, 2015; Sharma, Prakash, Sengar, Chaudhury, & Singh, 2015).

Regarding healthy neurodevelopment, research has supported a number of areas to target. Poor nutrition, both in útero and in early childhood, have been associated with negative and criminal outcomes (Neugebauer, Hoek, & Susser, 1999). Deficits of omega-3 fatty acids have been linked with impaired neurocognition and externalizing behavior (Liu & Raine, 2006; McNamara & Carlson, 2006). The opposite relationship is also supported; increased intake of omega-3 fatty acids has been associated with a variety of positive physical and mental health outcomes (Ruxton, Reed, Simpson, & Millington, 2004), increased brain volume in regions related to memory and emotion regulation (Conklin et al., 2007), and reduction in behavioral problems in children (Raine, Portnoy, Liu, Mahoomed, & Hibbeln, 2015). Studies examining the effect of nutritional supplements have suggested that reducing the amount of sugar consumed by offenders can significantly reduce offending during incarceration (Gesch, Hammond, Hampson, Eves, & Crowder, 2002; Schoenthaler, 1983). Thus, nutritional programs show some promise in reducing antisocial and criminal behavior.

A healthy social environment is also crucial for normative brain development and function. Early adversity and childhood maltreatment have been identified as significant risk factors for both neurobiological and behavioral problems (Mehta et al., 2009; Teicher et al., 2003; Tottenham et al., 2011). A review of maltreatment prevention programs supports the efficacy of nurse-family partnerships and programs that integrate early preschool with parent resources in reducing childhood maltreatment (Reynolds, Mathieson, & Topitzes, 2009). Promoting healthy brain development in útero and in crucial neurodeve-lopmental periods is likely to reduce externalizing behaviors, as well as other psychopathology.

Knowing that the social context could help to buffer biological risks is promising because it suggests that changing an individual's environment could mitigate biological criminogenic risk. Rather than providing a reductionist and deterministic perspective of the etiology of criminal behavior, incorporating biological factors in explanations of anti-social/criminal behaviors can highlight the plasticity of the human genome (Walsh & Yun, 2014). They can also provide a more holistic understanding of the etiologies of such behavior. For example, sex differences in heart rate have been found to partially explain the gender gap in crime (Choy, Raine, Venables, & Farrington, 2017). Social

interventions that aim to provide an enriched environment can be beneficial for all, but may be particularly important for individuals at higher biological risk for antisocial behavior. While biological explanations of antisocial and criminal behavior are growing, they are best thought of as complementary to current research and theories, and a potential new avenue to target with treatment options.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is psychophysiology? What are two common measures of psychophysiology? Why might low resting heart rate be associated with higher crime?
2. What roles do the prefrontal cortex and amygdala (regions of the brain) play in behavior? Why might the structure and functioning of these regions impact crime?
3. How would you respond to the claim that crime is inherited or genetically transmitted?
4. What is meant by gene-environment (G X E) interactions? Give an example of such an interaction.
5. Does the effect of biological factors on crime differ by type of crime and offender? Give an example of a possible difference in effect.
6. Pick one of the theories discussed in previous chapters (e.g., social learning, strain, control, labeling, feminist). How is the biological research described in this chapter relevant to that theory?
7. Based on the research described in this chapter, what policy recommendations would you make for controlling crime?

42.

Personality and Crime: Are Some People Crime Prone?*

Avshalom Caspi

Terrie E. Moffitt

Phil A. Silva

Magda Stouthamer-Loeber

Robert F. Krueger

Pamela S. Schmutte

Researchers do not argue that biological factors lead directly to crime. Rather, they argue that such factors, in combination with the environment, lead to traits that are conducive to crime. And data suggest that several specific traits are associated with crime, including impulsiveness, a desire for thrills and excitement, irritability, and a low concern for the welfare of others. Psychologists and others argue that many of these traits are associated with one another and often appear together in the same person. Thus, we have what might be called "super-traits." Psychologists have made much progress over the last two decades in identifying those super-traits that make up the human personality, although there is still some debate over whether there are three, four, or five super-traits (see Block, 1995; Caspi, 1998; Jones et al., 2011; Lahey and Waldman, 2005; Lilienfeld, 1999; Miller and Lynam, 2001; Watson et al., 1994).

This chapter draws on one of the leading psychological theories of human personality, which argues that there are three super-traits: constraint, negative emotionality, and positive emotionality. The article briefly describes these super-traits—including the specific traits that compose them—and then examines their relation to crime, using data from two rather different samples in New Zealand and Pittsburgh. Two of the traits, negative emotionality and constraint, are related to Gottfredson and Hirschi's concept of self-control (see Chapter 17 in Part V), but they claim that the concept of self-control is too simple: Crime-proneness is defined by more than a single dimension. You should keep their work in mind when reading the Gottfredson and Hirschi selection. At the end of this chapter, Caspi et al. discuss the origins of negative emotionality and constraint, stating that both super-traits are influenced by biological and environmental factors.

The research described here is important because it suggests that some individuals are crime prone. That is, some individuals are more likely than others to engage in crime in a given environment. As Caspi et al. state, individuals high in negative emotionality and low in constraint are more likely to interpret events as threatening and to act on their impulses; that is, they are "quick on the draw." Also, as others have argued, such individuals often influence their environment in ways that increase the likelihood of crime; for example, they often provoke others and select themselves into negative environments, such as delinquent peer groups and bad jobs. Yet, as Caspi et al. state near the start of their selection, many criminologists have dismissed the importance of personality traits. This attitude is starting to change, however, as additional evidence for the importance of such traits mounts (for overviews, see

Agnew, 2016; *Agnew and Brezina, 2018*; *Andrews and Bonta, 2006*; *Ellis and Walsh, 2006*; *Farrington, 1996*; *Farrington and Welsh, 2007*; *Hyatt et al., 2018*; *Lahey and Waldman, 2005*; *Miller and Lynam, 2001*; *Pratt and Cullen, 2000*).

References

Agnew, Robert. 2016. "A Theory of Crime Resistance and Susceptibility." *Criminology* **54**: 181–211.

Agnew, Robert and Timothy Brezina. 2018. *Juvenile Delinquency: Causes and Control*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Andrews, D. A. and James Bonta. 2006. *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*, 4th edition. Cincinnati: Anderson.

Block, Jack. 1995. "A Contrarian View of the Five-Factor Approach to Personality Description." *Psychological Bulletin* **117**: 187–215.

Caspi, Avshalom. 1998. "Personality Development Across the Life Course." In Nancy Eisenberg (ed.), *Handbook of Child Psychology*, Volume **3**: *Social, Emotional, and Personality Development*, pp. 311–318. New York: John Wiley.

Ellis, Lee and Anthony Walsh. 2006. *Criminology*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Farrington, David. 1996. "The Explanation and Prevention of Youthful Offending." In J. David Hawkins (ed.), *Delinquency and Crime: Current Theories*, pp. 68–148. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Farrington, David P. and Brandon C. Welsh. 2007. *Saving Children from a Life of Crime*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hyatt, Courtland S., Chelsea E. Sleep, Brandon M. Weiss, and Joshua D. Miller. 2018. "Personality and Aggression: A General Trait Perspective." In Alexander T. Vazsonyi, Daniel J. Flannery, and Matt DeLisi (eds.), *Violent Behavior and Aggression*, pp. 221–237. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Jones, Shayne E., Joshua D. Miller, and Donald R. Lyman. 2011. "Personality, Antisocial Behavior, and Aggression: A Meta-Analytic Review." *Journal of Criminal Justice* **39**: 329–337.

Lahey, Benjamin B. and Irwin D. Waldman. 2005. "A Developmental Model of the Propensity to Offend During Childhood and Adolescence." In David P. Farrington (ed.), *Integrated Developmental and Life-Course Theories of Offending*, pp. 15–50. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Lilienfeld, Scott O. 1999. "Anxiety Sensitivity and the Structure of Personality." In Steven Taylor (ed.), *Anxiety Sensitivity*, pp. 149–180. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Miller, Joshua D. and Donald Lynam. 2001. "Structural Models of Personality and Their Relation to Antisocial Behavior: A Meta-Analytic Review." *Criminology* **39**: 765–798.

Pratt, Travis C. and Francis T. Cullen. 2000. "The Empirical Status of Gottfredson and Hirschi's General Theory of Crime." *Criminology* **38**: 931–964.

Watson, David, Lee Anna Clark, and Allan Harkness. 1994. "Structures of Personality and Their Relevance to Psychopathology." *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* **103**: 18–31.

Are some people crime prone? Is there a criminal personality? Psychologists and criminologists have long been intrigued by the connection between personality and crime.…

We have studied personality and crime by using a two-pronged approach. First, we have studied individuals in different developmental contexts. Second, we have used multiple and independent measures of their personality and

their criminal involvement. In New Zealand we have studied 18-year-olds from an entire birth cohort; the New Zealand study permits us to make detailed comparisons between males and females. In the United States we have studied an ethnically diverse group of 12- and 13-year-old boys; the American study permits us to make detailed comparisons between blacks and whites. By studying different age cohorts in different nations, boys and girls, blacks and whites, and by collecting in each of our studies multiple and independent measures of behavior, we can ascertain with relative confidence the extent to which personality differences are linked to crime.

---

* Excerpted from "Personality and Crime: Are Some People Crime Prone? Replications of the Personality-Crime Relationship Across Countries, Genders, Races, and Methods," by Avshalom Caspi, Terrie E. Moffitt, Phil A. Silva, Magda Stouthamer-Loeber, Robert F. Krueger, and Pamela S. Schmutte, *Criminology* 32(2), May 1994. Reprinted by permission of the American Society of Criminology.

Personality and Crime

Personality psychologists have proposed numerous well-articulated theories linking personality to crime and other antisocial outcomes. For example, Eysenck (1977) associates crime with extreme individual values on three personality factors: extroversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism. Zuckerman (1989) regards criminality as the sine qua non of individuals high on a factor he calls P-ImpUSS, which is characterized by impulsivity, aggressiveness, and lack of social responsibility. Cloninger (1987), using his three-factor biosocial model of personality, suggests that persons high in novelty seeking and low in harm avoidance and reward dependence are likely to be today's delinquents and tomorrow's violent, antisocial adults. In addition, a group of psychologists have proposed a link between antisocial behavior and theoretical physiological systems within the brain that are presumed to modulate impulse expression (Gray, 1977). Deficiencies in these neural systems have been suggested as the source for aggression in adults (Fowles, 1980; Gorenstein and Newman, 1980), as well as for conduct problems in children (Quay, 1986).

Many of these theories rely on trait-based personality models. In the past, the existence of traits was viewed as controversial (Mischel, 1968). In the last 20 years, however, researchers have amassed solid evidence documenting the cross-situational consistency (Epstein and O'Brien, 1985) and the longitudinal stability (Caspi and Bem, 1990) of traits, and psychology has witnessed a renaissance of the trait as an essential personality construct (Kenrick and Funder, 1988; Tellegen, 1991). Traits represent consistent characteristics of individuals that are relevant to a wide variety of behavioral domains, including criminality (see Eysenck, 1991).

Advances in personality theory and assessment, however, have had little influence on research conducted by criminologists (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). Reviews of research on personality and crime appearing in mainstream criminology have identified numerous methodological problems with previous research (e.g., Schuessler and Cressey, 1950; Tennenbaum, 1977; Waldo and Dinitz, 1967), leading most criminologists to dismiss personality as a fruitless area of inquiry....

Methodological Problems in Linking Personality to Crime

Although some researchers already are convinced that personality variables are essential to understanding crime (e.g., Eysenck and Gudjonsson, 1989), the criminological reviews cited above suggest that this belief is far from universal. In particular, critics of empirical efforts to link personality to crime have pointed to problems in *measurement of personality, measurement of delinquency*, and *sampling*. In our research we have attempted to redress each of these problems.

Measurement of Personality

... In our studies of personality and crime we have used assessment instruments ... that measure a comprehensive variety of personality traits; they were designed to blanket the human personality. These instruments allowed us to identify a constellation of personality traits, not merely a single trait, that might be linked to criminal involvement.

Previous studies of personality and delinquency also have been criticized for employing delinquency and personality questionnaires that included virtually identical items (Tennenbaum, 1977). For example, both the MMPI and the CPI include such items as "I have never been in trouble with the law" and "Sometimes when I was young I stole things." Similarities between legally defined offenses and the wording of items on personality inventories may inflate correlations between these two theoretically distinct constructs. In our studies we maintained sensitivity to this issue by evaluating each personality item in terms of its potential semantic overlap with any actual illegal acts.

Measurement of Delinquency

In previous studies of personality and crime, the most commonly used delinquency measure was the subject's conviction record or his presence in a correctional facility. A fundamental problem with official measures, however, is that "hidden criminals," offenders who commit crimes but are not caught, escape empirical attention and may slip into "control" samples (Schuessler and Cressey, 1950). Because only the tip of the deviance iceberg is reflected by official statistics (Hood and Sparks, 1970), many criminologists have turned to less strongly biased measures—specifically, self-reported delinquency questionnaires (Hindelang et al., 1979, 1981; Hirschi et al., 1980).

Yet self-report measures are not faultless. They have been criticized for including trivial items that query about acts which are unlikely to result in official intervention, such as skipping school or defying parental authority (Hindelang et al., 1979; Hirschi et al., 1980). Similarly, infrequent offenders may tend to report trivial events such as sibling fisticuffs in response to questions about "assault," or taking the family car without permission in response to questions about "auto theft" (Elliott and Huizinga, 1989). In contrast, frequent offenders may tend to underreport their delinquent behavior because the individual acts are so commonplace that they are not salient in the offenders' memories (Hirschi et al., 1980). Because both official records and self-report delinquency questionnaires have unique benefits and shortcomings, the use of the two measures in tandem is the most effective empirical strategy (Hirschi et al., 1980).

In our studies of personality and crime, we have collected multiple and independent measures of delinquent behavior: police records of contact, court records of conviction, self-reports, and reports from independent

informants, parents, and teachers. These multiple measures have allowed us to identify robust personality correlates of crime that replicate across different measurement strategies.

Sampling

In previous studies of personality and crime, the most commonly used samples were drawn from incarcerated populations. These samples are not representative of offenders as a whole; they represent only the subset of offenders who actually are caught and subsequently are sent to jail (Hood and Sparks, 1970; Klein, 1987). Moreover, adjudicated offenders may differ systematically from non-adjudicated offenders; offenders who are white, middle class, or female may be overlooked inadvertently (e.g., Taylor and Watt, 1977). In addition, the offenders' personal characteristics may influence official responses to their aberrant behavior; for example, some offenders may have enough poise to talk their way out of an arrest. Finally, incarceration itself may contribute to personality aberrations (Schuessler and Cressey, 1950; Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985). Thus, non-representative sampling has clouded interpretation of observed differences between captive offenders and comparison groups.

In our studies of personality and crime, we have surveyed two different age cohorts whose members' level of involvement in illegal behaviors ranges from complete abstinence to a wide variety of delinquent violations. Therefore, our results are not limited to a selected minority of adolescent offenders who have been caught and convicted of their crimes.

The results of our studies are presented in two parts. Study 1 explores the personality-crime relationship in a birth cohort of 18-year-old males and females living in New Zealand. Study 2 attempts to replicate these findings among 12- and 13-year-olds living in a large American city.

Study 1: Personality and Crime Among Males and Females: Evidence From a New Zealand Birth Cohort

Study 1 explores the personality-crime relationship in a longitudinal-epidemiological sample (Krueger et al., in press). Members of this sample have been studied since birth. At age 18 they were administered an omnibus self-report personality inventory that assesses individual differences in several focal personality dimensions. In addition to this personality assessment, we gathered information about their delinquency using multiple and independent data sources: self-reports, informant reports, and official records....

Measurement of Personality

As part of the age-18 assessment, 862 subjects completed a modified version (Form NZ) of the Multidimensional Personality Questionnaire (MPQ; Tellegen, 1982). The MPQ is a self-report personality instrument designed to assess a broad range of individual differences in affective and behavioral style. The 177-item version of the MPQ (Form NZ) yields 10 different personality scales (Tellegen, 1982: 7–8)....

The 10 scales constituting the MPQ can be viewed at the higher-order level as defining three superfactors [see Table 42.1]: Constraint, Negative Emotionality, and Positive Emotionality (Tellegen, 1985; Tellegen and Waller, in press). *Constraint* is a combination of the Traditionalism, Harm Avoidance, and Control scales. Individuals high on this factor tend to endorse conventional social norms, to avoid thrills, and to act in a cautious and restrained manner. *Negative Emotionality* is a combination of the Aggression, Alienation, and Stress Reaction scales. Individuals high on this dimension have a low general threshold for the experience of negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, and anger, and tend to break down under stress (Tellegen et al., 1988). *Positive Emotionality* is a combination of the Achievement, Social Potency, Well-Being, and Social Closeness scales. Individuals high on Positive Emotionality have a lower threshold for the experience of positive emotions and for positive engagement with their social and work environments, and tend to view life as essentially a pleasurable experience (Tellegen et al., 1988)....

TABLE 42.1 MPQ Scale Descriptions and Internal Consistency Coefficients

MPQ Scale	Alpha	Description of a High Scorer
Constraint		
Traditionalism	.63	Desires a conservative social environment; endorses high moral standards.
Harm Avoidance	.71	Avoids excitement and danger; prefers safe activities even if they are tedious.
Control	.79	Is reflective, cautious, careful, rational, planful.
Negative Emotionality		
Aggression	.78	Hurts others for own advantage; will frighten and cause discomfort for others.
Alienation	.76	Feels mistreated, victimized, betrayed, and the target of false rumors.
Stress Reaction	.80	Is nervous, vulnerable, sensitive, prone to worry.
Positive Emotionality		

MPQ Scale	Alpha	Description of a High Scorer
Achievement	.69	Works hard; enjoys demanding projects and working long hours.
Social Potency	.76	Is forceful and decisive; fond of influencing others; fond of leadership roles.
Well-Being	.67	Has a happy, cheerful disposition; feels good about self and sees a bright future.
Social Closeness	.75	Is sociable; likes people and turns to others for comfort.

Results

Higher-Order Personality Factors and Delinquency

To summarize the personality correlates of delinquent behavior across the three independent data sources, we examined correlations between the MPQ's three higher-order factors and each measure of delinquent activity....

Among both males and females, Constraint and Negative Emotionality emerged as robust correlates of delinquent behavior across the three different data sources. *Positive Emotionality* was not associated significantly with any measure of delinquent behavior.... [M]ale and female delinquents exhibited convergent personality profiles characterized by impulsivity, danger seeking, a rejection of traditional values, aggressive attitudes, feelings of alienation, and an adversarial interpersonal attitude....

Criminologists would be persuaded more fully by evidence linking personality traits to crime if personality traits could be shown to relate to serious criminal behavior. To address this issue, we examined the higher-order personality scores of three groups of persons: (1) persons who self-reported having committed multiple (two or more) index offenses in the past year, (2) persons who were identified through court conviction records as repeat offenders, and (3) persons who had been convicted for a violent offense. We restricted this examination to males because relatively few females were involved in serious criminal acts, as defined above....

Persons involved in serious criminal behavior scored significantly lower on MPQ Constraint and significantly higher on Negative Emotionality....

In sum, the results from our analyses of the personality correlates of serious crime are very similar to the results from our analyses of the personality correlates of other antisocial activities. Apparently the same personality traits are implicated in antisocial acts of varying severity.

The results have revealed robust personality correlates of delinquency. Among both males and females, three personality scales were correlated with all three independent sources of delinquency data (self-reports, informant reports, and official reports): Delinquency was associated negatively with the MPQ scales' Traditionalism and Control, and positively with Aggression. These results suggest that young men and women who engaged in delinquency preferred rebelliousness to conventionality, behaved impulsively rather than cautiously, and were likely to take advantage of others.

Two additional personality scales showed consistent patterns. Among males, all three data sources correlated with the MPQ scale Alienation, and two data sources correlated with the MPQ scale Stress Reaction; among females, two data sources correlated with both Alienation and Stress Reaction. These results suggest that young men and women who engaged in delinquency were also likely to feel betrayed and used by their friends and to become easily upset and irritable. At the higher-order factor level, greater delinquent participation was associated with a unique trait configuration: greater negative emotionality *and* less constraint.

These findings were not compromised by problems inherent in measuring delinquency; the personality correlates were robust across different methods of measuring delinquency. Moreover, the interpretation of these data was not compromised by predictor-criterion overlap because we eliminated any content overlap between the personality

items and the delinquency measures. These findings, however, were observed in a single sample. We now turn to a replication of these findings in a different context.

Study 2: Personality and Crime Among Blacks and Whites: Evidence from an American Metropolis

Study 1 reported on mostly white adolescents who live in a mid-sized city with little social decay in comparison with America's largest cities. It is possible that the racial or ecological composition of this sample may have distorted the relation between personality and crime. For example, it may be that relations between personality characteristics and crime may be attenuated among inner-city youths who experience many contextual pressures to engage in illegal behavior. Will negative emotionality and constraint predict delinquent behavior in individuals from different environments and during different developmental stages?

We address these generalizability issues in Study 2 by exploring the personality-crime relationship in a separate sample of American inner-city youths age 12 and 13. At that age, caregivers provided extensive personality descriptions of the youths. In addition, we gathered information about the youths' delinquency using multiple and independent data sources: self-reports, teachers' reports, and parents' reports.

Method

Measurement of Personality

Because the MPQ is not appropriate for younger adolescents, we used a different personality assessment instrument to describe the personalities of the boys in Pittsburgh. Specifically, the caregivers completed the "Common-Language" version of the California Child Q-sort (CCQ), a language-simplified personality assessment procedure intended for use with lay observers (Caspi et al., 1992).... The CCQ contains 100 statements written on individual cards that describe a wide range of personality attributes (e.g., "He plans ahead; he thinks before he does something," "He is determined in what he does; he does not give up easily," "He tries to see what and how much he can get away with"). The caregiver's task was to sort these item cards into a forced nine-category distribution along a continuum ranging from "most like this boy" to "most *unlike* this boy." ...

Results

To assess the relation between personality characteristics and delinquency, we computed correlations between the CCQ measures of Constraint, Negative Emotionality, and Positive Emotionality with measures of delinquency drawn from the three independent data sources: self-reports, teachers' reports, and parents' reports....

Across all three data sources, Constraint and Negative Emotionality emerged as robust correlates of delinquency among both black and white adolescents. The positive correlations with Negative Emotionality suggested that delinquent adolescents were prone to respond to frustrating events with strong negative emotions, to feel stressed or harassed, and to approach interpersonal relationships with an adversarial attitude. The negative correlations with Constraint suggested that delinquent adolescents were likely to be impulsive, danger-seeking, and rejecting of conventional values. Positive emotionality was not associated robustly with delinquent behavior....

Discussion

Our studies have revealed that individual differences in personality are correlated consistently with delinquency. Although we performed many analyses, the significant correlations were not scattered randomly across variables; rather, the same pattern of personality correlations was repeated consistently. We obtained these correlations in different countries, in different age cohorts, across gender, and across race. We also obtained these correlations when we measured delinquent involvement with self-reports, teachers' reports, parents' reports, informants' reports, and official records, and when we measured serious crime and less serious delinquency. Finally, we obtained these correlations when we measured personality both with self-reports and with parents' reports. The personality correlates of delinquency were robust: Greater delinquent participation was associated with greater negative emotionality and less constraint.

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) have suggested that individual differences in "self-control" predispose some people to criminal behavior; this single stable individual difference is said to define a propensity or proneness to crime. Our findings support this theory somewhat, but they also suggest that it is simplistic psychologically. Crime-proneness is defined not by a single tendency (such as self-control or impulsivity) but by multiple psychological components. Across different samples and different methods, our studies of personality and crime suggest that crime-proneness is defined both by high negative emotionality and by low constraint.

How Might Negative Emotionality and Constraint Lead to Crime?

Negative emotionality is a tendency to experience aversive affective states such as anger, anxiety, and irritability (Watson and Clark, 1984). It is likely that individuals with chronically high levels of such negative emotions perceive interpersonal events differently than other people. They may be predisposed to construe events in a biased way, perceiving threat in the acts of others and menace in the vicissitudes of everyday life.

This situation may be aggravated when negative emotionality is accompanied by weak constraint—that is, great difficulty in modulating impulses. In low-constraint individuals, negative emotions may be translated more readily into action. Such volatile individuals should be, in the vernacular of the Wild West, "quick on the draw." Theoretically, antisocial behavior should be likely among individuals who are high in negative emotionality and low in constraint.

What Are the Origins of Negative Emotionality and Constraint?

Our findings may be placed into a developmental context by considering theories about the environmental and biological origins of negative emotionality and constraint.

The family environment has a pervasive influence on children's lives and personality development, particularly on the development of antisocial behavior (e.g., Patterson, 1982). Harsh, inconsistent disciplinary practices and a chaotic home environment have been shown to predict later aggression (Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986). Living under the constant threat of emotional or physical harm makes negative affect more than simply a perceptual bias for these youths; negative affect is rooted in the realities of their everyday lives. Constraint also may be affected

by family dynamics. For example, parental conflict has been found to predict children's scores on constraint at age 18 (Vaughn et al., 1988). Thus, a personality configuration involving high levels of negative affect and low levels of constraint may develop when children grow and learn in a discordant family environment where parent-child interactions are harsh or inconsistent.

Negative affectivity and constraint also are considered to have specific neurobiological underpinnings. Recent research has pointed to a possible connection between the rate at which the brain expends its neurotransmitter substances and dimensions of personality (Cloninger, 1987). For example, abnormally low levels of a metabolite by-product from the neurotransmitter called serotonin have been found in the cerebrospinal fluid of prison inmates whose offense history is habitually violent and impulsive (Linnoila et al, 1983; Virkunnen et al., 1987). This finding has led theorists to outline the neural mechanisms by which low serotonin levels in the brain could simultaneously produce impulsivity *and* greater negative affectivity (Depue and Spoont, 1986; Spoont, 1992).

Theories linking personality traits to the primary neurotransmitters also may have important implications for research on the link between crime and genetics. Some adoption and twin studies have demonstrated a significant heritability for criminal behavior (see DiLalla and Gottesman, 1989; Mednick et al., 1986; Plomin et al., 1990), but these findings remain controversial in criminology (Walters and White, 1989). If future behavior genetic studies should document significant heritability for criminal behavior, how should we interpret this finding? Clearly, behavior itself cannot be inherited. Low serotonin levels, however, may be a heritable diathesis for a personality style involving high levels of negative affect and low levels of constraint, which generates in turn a vulnerability to criminal behavior. Indeed, negative affect and constraint themselves appear to be highly heritable; a study of twins reared together versus twins reared apart (Tellegen et al., 1988) found that more than 50% of the observed variance in both Negative Emotionality and Constraint (assessed by the MPQ) could be attributed to genetic factors….

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Caspi et al. state that many criminologists have been critical of previous research linking personality traits to crime, citing certain methodological problems with such research. What are these problems? How do Caspi et al. overcome them?
2. A researcher finds that certain personality traits are more common among prison inmates than among people in the general population. Does this mean that such traits *cause* crime? If not, why not?
3. Describe the super-traits of negative emotionality and constraint. List two questions you might ask respondents in a survey to measure each trait (or dimensions of each trait).
4. Why did Caspi et al. explore the relationship between personality traits and crime using two samples?
5. Describe all the ways that negative emotionality and low constraint might increase the likelihood of crime.

PART XIII

GETTING INTO AND OUT OF CRIME: LIFE-COURSE THEORIES

Francis T. Cullen
University of Cincinnati

Robert Agnew
Emory University

Pamela Wilcox
Pennsylvania State University

Psychologists have long understood that human personality and behavioral patterns emerge through a developmental process that unfolds from birth onward. They study infants and their interaction with mothers; they have specialized courses in "child psychology" and "adolescent psychology." They take for granted that what occurs early in life may shape—sometimes profoundly—what occurs later in life.

Until the last two or three decades, however, most criminologists systematically ignored these fundamental insights of psychology (for exceptions, see scholars in Part XII). Equipped with a thoroughly sociological worldview, they had little interest in tracing how individuals *develop* over time. Instead, they were concerned with what happens when individuals are placed in a particular *social context*. This distinction is somewhat subtle, but it is important: A developmental perspective focuses on the individual and how the person's life unfolds as he or she traverses through different contexts. A traditional criminological perspective is more interested in which contexts—or features of the context—are crime-inducing. Another way of phrasing this issue is that a developmental perspective is *dynamic*, studying whether an individual's behavior remains stable or changes over time. A traditional criminological perspective often is *static*, assuming that contexts have stable and enduring effects on the people caught in them.

This characterization might be a bit of an over-statement, for there are always exceptions to the rule. Even so, most criminological theories have paid, at best, only a vague and implicit attention to what goes on during childhood. Let us take, for example, Hirschi's (1969 [Chapter 16 in this volume]) social bond theory in which he argues that attachment to parents is a significant indirect social control. Psychologists have published volumes of studies on the concept of attachment and on what attachment between infants and parents involves (see, e.g., Bowlby, 1969). In contrast, in Hirschi's theory, there is only the vague sense that attachment to parents must have evolved sometime in childhood. But this process is not investigated or *given any theoretical weight*; that is, it is not an object of study and its implications for understanding the origins and effects of the social bond are left unexplored.

Or to take but one other example, let us consider social disorganization theory (see Part II in this volume). The theory logically suggests that the effects of social disorganization are restricted to the present moment. We would anticipate that growing up in a disorganized neighborhood—spending years in a "delinquency area," to use Shaw and

McKay's term—would have some criminogenic effect above and beyond simply being in such a community at the current time. If this were the case, we might expect that theorists would investigate how the length of residing in a troubled area affects youths, or they might explore the effects of disorganization on children versus, say, adolescents. But, at least traditionally, questions of this nature escaped systematic study by social disorganization theorists (for an exception, see Sampson, 1997).

The downplaying of childhood was probably not a conscious conclusion that the early years in life were uninvolved in crime; after all, who would really say that what goes on in childhood is unimportant? Rather, it reflected the intellectual evolution of criminology in directions that simply placed childhood "on the back burner"—just far enough out of mind that the implications of taking childhood seriously did not have to be entertained. Two factors contributed to this neglect of the early years of life and, in turn, of considering crime as a developmental process.

First, research studies have long revealed that participation in crime peaks during the teenage years. Crime is highest around age 17 or 18, with violent crime reaching its apex a bit later (Agnew and Brezina, 2012; Caspi and Moffitt, 1995; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016). As Caspi and Moffitt (1995: 493) note, "the majority of criminal offenders are teenagers; by the early 20s, the number of active offenders decreases by over 50 percent; by age 28, almost 85 percent of former delinquents desist from offending." Given these empirical realities, the relevance of childhood experiences was not readily apparent. Rather, it "made sense" to ask what was special about the *juvenile* years—peer relationships, school experiences, frustration in the job market, labeling by police, threats to masculinity, and so on—that suddenly compels large numbers of American youths to break the law, with some doing so at a high rate. This search for the criminogenic conditions that are integral to the teenage years is why a large proportion of crime theories were actually put forth as theories of "delinquency."

Second, the focus on juveniles seemed not only reasonable—given their high involvement in crime—but also *practical*. Studying crime and testing criminological theories is often a daunting task. But teenagers are an ideal population to investigate. Thus, in any community, most of them congregate daily in one place: the schools. Researchers found it convenient to arrive at a high school and, over a day or two, distribute questionnaires for students to complete. These survey instruments would contain both questions measuring different theories and questions measuring involvement in crime (called a "self-report delinquency scale"). Relying on students had one other advantage: They were used to filling out pencil and paper "tests," which questionnaires approximated. Not surprisingly, literally hundreds of these studies were conducted, and they largely form the basis for current assessments of whether or not given theories are empirically supported.

It is important to note that the vast majority of these surveys were *cross-sectional* in design; that is, they did not follow youngsters over time (a *longitudinal* study) but rather studied them by taking a "slice" or "cross section" of their lives at one time and place. Again, cross-sectional studies are time and cost effective. Tracing what happens in an individual's life over several years is difficult and requires an ongoing team of researchers. Studying the goings on in someone's life from *childhood* into later years is extremely challenging. The point is that surveying juveniles cross-sectionally was practical and within reach of many scholars. But by choosing this approach, it was not possible to consider the role of childhood and human development in crime; such questions fell outside the dominant research design employed by criminologists.

Gradually, however, findings from the limited number of longitudinal studies gained notice (see, e.g., Farrington, 1995, 2003; Farrington and Loeber, 1999; Loeber et al., 2003; Robins and Wish, 1977; Thornberry and Krohn, 2003). Most notably, spurred by the work of Sampson and Laub (1993; see also Laub and Sampson, 1991), scholars paid renewed attention to the research of Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck (1950; [Chapter 40 in Part XII]). Sheldon Glueck was a professor in the law school at Harvard University; reflecting the gender bias of the times, his wife, Eleanor, was consigned to a soft-money research assistant position. Their most famous investigation involved a

longitudinal study of 500 delinquents and a matched sample of 500 nondelinquent boys. Both groups consisted of white males ages 10 to 17. The delinquent boys were selected from two juvenile reformatories in Massachusetts, whereas the nondelinquents were from Boston public schools. The study, which spanned 1949 to 1963, included follow-up of the sample at age 25 and at age 32 (Laub and Sampson, 1991; Sampson and Laub, 1993).

Although the Gluecks' research received much attention when published, it also was attacked by Edwin Sutherland for not testing any theory about crime and for downplaying sociological factors. Sociologists in general came to reject the Gluecks' work, stereotyping it as methodologically flawed and as portraying offenders as biologically deficient. In the ensuing years, their writings were infrequently read (Laub and Sampson, 1991). This neglect was unfortunate, because the Gluecks' detailed study provided insights that would come to occupy a central place within criminology in the 1990s and beyond (Laub and Sampson, 1991). For our purposes, three contributions are most significant.

First, the Gluecks showed the importance of discovering empirically how delinquents and nondelinquents differ from one another. They embraced an "eclectic" or "multifactor" approach in which conclusions about the causes of crime were not driven by any single theory but by the data. This was a prelude to today's scholars' search for "risk factors" that place youngsters in jeopardy of offending (see, e.g., Loeber and Farrington, 1998; Tanner-Smith et al., 2013). Second, they established that early antisocial conduct was tied to later criminal behavior. That is, there is a good deal of stability in waywardness from youth into early adulthood. Criminal involvement thus is developmental; what happens at one stage in life influences what happens at the next stage in life. Third, they demonstrated that antisocial youths not only are shaped by their circumstances (e.g., quality of family) but also impact their social world. Delinquent youngsters, for example, dislike and misbehave at school, and they choose friends who are similarly delinquent. As such, they are architects of their future, making decisions that potentially impoverish their lives. The role of offenders in knifing off prosocial opportunities is an insight that would reappear in later developmental theories.

Contemporary criminologists' consciousness about these and similar findings were especially raised by the writings of a limited group of controversial but prominent scholars (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985). Their central observation was that relatively few youths suddenly become serious, chronic offenders during the juvenile years. Although what we call "crime" may first emerge during adolescence, a range of "conduct problems"—precursors to crime, such as bullying, lying, and stealing—arise during childhood. In short, childhood antisocial behavior is perhaps the strongest predictor of involvement in serious juvenile offending.

The theoretical implications of this insight are profound. First, it suggests that the central causes of crime likely lie in childhood and thus that theories need to take this fact into account. Second, theories that have focused exclusively on "what happens" in the teenage years and beyond are incomplete, if not fully incorrect. In short, most existing theories of crime are wrong because they attribute crime to conditions (e.g., dropping out of school, unemployment) that occur long after individuals start a trajectory into crime during childhood. Third, the link between childhood and later deviance—although not ironclad—is sufficiently strong to show that involvement in crime is a dynamic, developmental process. Accordingly, criminological theory should become largely a branch of "developmental criminology" (see, more generally, Farrington and Loeber, 2013; Le Blanc and Loeber, 1998; Loeber and Le Blanc, 1990; Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1996). Other scholars, making the same point, preferred to label this paradigm—this fresh way of thinking about and researching crime—"life-course criminology" (Benson, 2013; Sampson and Laub, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1995; see also Farrington, 2005). Another option, now growing in popularity, is to combine this terminology. For example, in the American Society of Criminology, members interested in this area have created the "Division of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology." Often, scholars abbreviate this name by using the acronym "DLC criminology."

To date, the most sophisticated scholarship within developmental criminology has been empirical and descriptive, as researchers have used longitudinal designs to document the factors that place individuals at risk for crime at different points in the life course. Biosocial criminology has played an invaluable role in identifying factors (e.g., brain structure and function, genetics) that had been neglected by traditional criminologists (see Part XII; see also Walsh and Beaver, 2009; Wright et al., 2008). Unfortunately, developmental *theories* of crime—attempts to explain why people develop into and out of crime—have lagged behind. Still, important conceptual frameworks have been advanced (Cullen et al., 2012; Farrington, 2005). We believe that it is useful to separate these initial theories into three categories: (1) theories of continuity, (2) theories of continuity *or* change, and (3) theories of continuity *and* change.

Continuity

A developmental pattern over the life course can be marked by *continuity*—the behavior is stable and continuous—or marked by *change*—behavior on one pathway departs and heads in an alternative direction. As noted, life-course theories differ in whether they predict that the dominant pattern in the development of criminal conduct is continuity or change. As a group, these authors tend to agree that childhood is a time during which a criminal trajectory—especially for the most serious, chronic offenders—starts. They use the term "onset" to describe this initial entry into crime. They also tend to agree that some individual differences in the propensity for crime are established. They use the term "heterogeneity" (as opposed to "homogeneity") to describe how people vary in their orientation toward criminal conduct. But despite these points of agreement, theorists begin to part company when deciding the importance of the role played in crime causation by the criminal propensities that emerge in childhood.

For example, are criminal propensities developed in childhood carried by a person throughout life? If some people enter a life course of crime in their early years, are there others who start offending later in life—such as during adolescence? If so, do these early and late starters into crime differ from one another? Furthermore, among those who show signs of criminal propensity during childhood, are there some who continue into serious delinquency and others who do not? How might we explain how youngsters—or adults—escape the life of crime that seemingly lay ahead for them? It is challenging questions such as these that developmental theories of crime seek to answer.

Individual trait perspectives (see Part XII) tend to be *continuity* theories. Typically, the reasoning is that once a trait emerges or becomes part of someone's personality, this trait is difficult to "get rid of." A person thus carries the criminogenic trait across time and, within any one time, across social contexts. Because the trait is enduring, involvement in crime also tends to be enduring. In short, the trait produces continuity in criminal behavior.

Within criminology, sociological perspectives tend to be implicitly continuity theories. We say "implicitly" because the issue of continuity is not directly addressed and thus the theory's stance on the issue must be inferred from its logic. In any event, most sociological theories imply that once people become criminal—whether due to strain, a broken social bond, or perhaps differential association—they will tend to stay criminal. They rarely address the issue of "desistance" or the process whereby people stop committing crimes.

Of course, sociological theories could be used—and in a limited number of cases have been used—to explain why people stop committing crimes (see, e.g., Agnew, 1997; Sampson and Laub, 1993; Thornberry, 1987; Warr, 1998). Indeed, these theories are more amenable to explaining change than are trait theories: If social situations change (e.g., strain is eliminated, bonds are established), then it would seem logical that crime will decrease or stop. To

explain desistance, individual trait theorists would have to explain how the crime-inducing trait somehow vanished—a more difficult task than explaining a change in social conditions external to the individual.

In this context, within the existing developmental models, the most important continuity perspective is Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) *self-control theory*, which they published in their now classic *A General Theory of Crime* (see also Gottfredson, 2006; Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1995). We are reviewing their thinking here because of its relevance to life-course criminology. Gottfredson and Hirschi's theory, however, was previously studied in Part V, where "varieties of control theory" were presented (for a review of this work, see the introductions to Part V and Chapter 17). It might be advantageous for readers to revisit these earlier materials.

As may be recalled, Gottfredson and Hirschi suggest that an enduring propensity to commit crime, which they call "low self-control," emerges in childhood (by about age 8). They link the failure to develop internal controls to the failure of parents to supervise their children, to recognize behavior that is deviant, and then to punish and correct such conduct when it occurs. Individuals with low self-control "will tend to be impulsive, insensitive, physical (as opposed to mental), risk-taking, short-sighted, [and] nonverbal" (1990: 90). Further, "since there is considerable tendency for these traits to come together in the same people, and since the traits tend to persist through life, it seems reasonable to consider them as comprising a stable construct useful in the explanation of crime" (pp. 90–91). It also is relevant that Gottfredson and Hirschi believe that, once established, low self-control is highly resistant to being altered—even if individuals experience fortuitous changes in their life circumstances (e.g., acquire a good job) or the planned interventions of the criminal justice system (e.g., rehabilitation programs).

Thus, according to Gottfredson and Hirschi, individuals with low self-control carry this bundle of traits with them wherever they go and for however long they are on this earth. In childhood, they bully, lie, and steal; as teenagers and adults, they avail themselves of the opportunity to become involved in a range of delinquencies and crimes. Low self-control—their tendency to seek immediate gratification, to take risks, to be unmindful of future consequences—infects virtually every aspect of their lives. They not only break the law but also are more likely to create public disorder, to drink and take drugs, to drive under the influence of intoxicants and get in accidents, and to become ill and die young. They are poor at forming and sustaining quality friendships and marital relationships, father or mother children out of wedlock, suffer more divorces, drop out of school more often, and have difficulty finding and keeping employment. Those with low self-control are, in short, architects of a life that is replete with crime, deviance, and social failure.

Four final observations are required. First, it should be clear why Gottfredson and Hirschi's perspective is a *continuity theory*. Individuals, it is said, can never escape their low self-control. People do not change, and if they do, it is merely because opportunities to express their low self-control have been limited. As a result, they tend to be involved in crime and/or other manifestations of social failure throughout their lives. Stability of antisocial conduct—not change from antisocial to prosocial conduct—is thus a core premise of self-control theory.

Second, Gottfredson and Hirschi's model begins as a sociological theory but ends as an individual differences theory. Low self-control is not due to biological deficiencies or to psychological dysfunction. Rather, it is produced by differential social experience: Good parental monitoring instills self-control, whereas poor parental monitoring does not. But once implanted, these differences in self-control among individuals are virtually intractable and set for life. Self-control thus differentiates who people are—their core individual traits—and, in turn, differentiates the life course that these people will experience.

Third, self-control theory is a rejection of the fundamental premise of Hirschi's social bond theory (Evans et al., 1997; Taylor, 2001). Previously, Hirschi proposed that weak social bonds caused criminal involvement. Now, Hirschi and Gottfredson (1995) maintain that *both* weak social bonds *and* crime are caused by the underlying trait of low

self-control (i.e., people lacking in self-control not only commit crimes but also fail at school, jobs, and social relationships). In methodological terms, the relationship between social bonds and crime is held to be spurious (Evans et al., 1997; Wright et al., 1999).

Fourth, Gottfredson and Hirschi do not deny that, overall, crime increases in the teenage years and declines as people grow older; in fact, they assert that this age-crime curve is "invariant" across societies. This rise and fall in crime rates would seem to contradict their theory; after all, it means that some people must be entering and leaving crime. Gottfredson and Hirschi do admit that why the age-crime curve exists is a social science mystery that has not yet been adequately solved by any criminological theory—including theirs. Regardless, they answer their critics in this way: At any given point in the life course, individuals low in self-control will have higher criminal involvement—and other manifestations of social failure—than individuals higher in self-control. Thus, although "crime everywhere declines with age … differences in 'crime' tendency across individuals remains relatively stable over the life course" (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990: 144).

Continuity or Change

Terrie Moffitt (1993 [Chapter 43 in this volume]) approaches the age-crime curve in a very different way (see also Caspi and Moffitt, 1995). She suggests that the jump in crime during the teenage years conceals two groups that take very different developmental pathways into crime. One group, which she calls *life-course-persistent* offenders (LCPs), start antisocial acts early and continue their waywardness into and beyond adolescence. The second group, which she calls *adolescence-limited* offenders (ALs), start and finish their criminality during the teenage years. The age-crime curve is high during adolescence because of the high offending of the LCPs and the temporary offending of the ALs. Theoretically, the task is to explain why one group, the LCPs, manifest continuity in offending, while the other group, the ALs, manifest discontinuity or change in offending. Because youngsters tend to take one pathway or the other, her theory is a theory of continuity *or* change.

Life-course-persistent offenders make up only a small percentage—perhaps about 5%—of the population. According to Moffitt (1993), "continuity is the hallmark" of this group (p. 679), with their antisocial behavior "stable from preschool to adulthood" (p. 680). Thus, at age 4, they bite and hit others; at age 10, they skip school and steal from stores; at age 16, they sell drugs and steal vehicles; at age 20, they rape and rob; and at age 30, they engage in fraud and child abuse (p. 679). In her view, "the underlying disposition remains the same, but its expression changes form as new social opportunities arise at different points in development" (p. 679). Of course, this leads to the question: What creates this "underlying disposition" that is powerful enough to create persistent offending across the life course?

Whereas Gottfredson and Hirschi link criminal propensity to inadequate parenting, Moffitt outlines a more complicated developmental process in which individual traits interact with the social environment to entrench youngsters in persistent antisociality. The development into life-course-persistent offending starts with "neuropsychological deficits." Essentially, when normal brain development is disrupted—such as through exposure to drugs and poor nutrition in the prenatal period or through injury and exposure to toxins (e.g., lead) during childhood—psychological deficits are produced. These typically include "high activity level, irritability, poor self-control, and low cognitive ability" (Moffitt, 1993, p. 683).

These traits or individual differences are linked directly to misconduct and social failure throughout life. Again, this view is similar to Gottfredson and Hirschi's theory of low self-control. But Moffitt argues that these deficits also lock

individuals into crime by the way in which they interact with the social environment to create disadvantages that "ensnare" people in an antisocial life. In childhood, for example, people with neuropsychological deficits often evoke harsh and erratic parenting, which in turn exacerbates their antisocial orientation. They are more likely to fail at school or to become pregnant as teens—choices that restrict their ability to enter conventional social roles that might extricate them from crime. Or they may lose jobs or end up in prison, experiences that make exiting from their developmental pattern difficult. In short, individual deficits or traits produce stability in offending in two interrelated ways: first, by their constant or "contemporary" effects (i.e., always being "in" the individual); and second, by the way they foster "cumulative continuity"—a mounting array of lost opportunities, failures, and poor choices that "prune away the options for change" (p. 684).

"Adolescence-limited" offenders, as their label implies, restrict their criminality largely to the teenage years. Moffitt contends that as youths enter adolescence, their chief developmental challenge is to overcome the "maturity gap" created by the mismatch between their adult biological development and modern society's expectation that they refrain from adult behaviors for several years (e.g., sexual activity, smoking, consuming goods). This gap between biological and social maturity is a source of dissatisfaction and motivation for delinquency. The motivation is translated into behavior through "social mimicry"—a process whereby youngsters model the delinquency conduct of other adolescents, usually LCPs in their own age cohort or older youths. Delinquency also occurs because it is self-reinforcing in that it shows, symbolically, autonomy from adults and maturity. Thus, "every curfew broken, car stolen, joint smoked, and baby conceived is a statement of independence" (Caspi and Moffitt, 1995; 500).

Adulthood, however, brings desistance from crime. As the maturity gap closes, adult conventional roles become available (e.g., jobs, marriage), and the consequences for misconduct escalate, there is a corresponding decrease in the appeal of, and reinforcements for, delinquency. Misfortune during the teenage years—such as drug abuse, incarceration, or prematurely becoming a parent—traps a few ALs in crime well into the adult years. But unlike the LCPs, most of the ALs are able to take advantage of conventional opportunities to change and move on with their lives. Their antisocial conduct is thus characterized by discontinuity, not continuity, and is limited to their adolescent years.

Moffitt's two-group taxonomy—ALs and LCPs—has come under scrutiny, with some scholars questioning whether such groups exist and others arguing that there may be more than just two groups (see, e.g., Blokland et al., 2005; Laub and Sampson, 2003; Sampson and Laub, 2005). Over the years, Moffitt (2006, 2018) has reviewed much of this evidence (see also Bushway, 2013; Moffitt et al., 2001; Piquero and Moffitt, 2005). Although not denying the existence of other offender groups that may have distinct developmental pathways, she argues that a large proportion of offending can be explained by her theory. In 2006, Moffitt concluded that after a decade of research, "what can be stated with some certainty is that the hypothesized life-course persistent antisocial individual exists, at least during the first three decades of life" (pp. 301–302).

More recently, Moffitt (2018: 184) reached a similar conclusion, noting that "empirical research continues to sand and polish" her core propositions. Her review suggested three interesting updates. First, in addition to the AL and LCP groups, she noted the existence of "a low or non-offender group" (p. 180). Second, especially for the LCP group, "advances in the genomic sciences" and in "neuroimaging" indicate that genetics and "difficulties in the brain's mental functions" are implicated in LCP development (p. 182). Third, Moffitt's (2018: 181) taxonomy was "proposed in an era when the adolescent crime peak meant 'street crimes,' such as shoplifting, house-breaking and vehicle theft. But virtual Internet-enabled crimes do not require physical strength or proximity." As a result, Moffitt advises, research is needed on how the taxonomy applies in those committing "digital crime" (p. 181).

Continuity and Change

In 1985, while researching the archives of Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck (Chapter 40), John Laub was startled to discover that the longitudinal data collected by the Gluecks were gathering dust in the sub-basement of the Harvard Law School Library. Stored in tens of boxes, this information was an untapped source of detailed information on Boston-area youngsters. Recall that the Gluecks had collected detailed information on 500 delinquent boys and a matched sample of 500 nondelinquent boys. These youths, born in the Great Depression, were between the ages of 10 and 17. The Gluecks then conducted follow-ups with them at age 25 and at age 32 (Sampson and Laub, 1993).

Along with his collaborator Robert Sampson, Laub quickly realized the rich criminological treasure that lay before him: He had rediscovered one of the greatest longitudinal data sets ever collected. But the information was in raw form and reconstructing the files for use required years of painstaking work. Later, Laub and Sampson (2003) would add new information to the original data set. They would follow up the 500 delinquents in the sample until age 70 and conduct intensive interviews with 52 of them.

Based on the original and newly collected data, the theorists published two classic books. In the first, they presented their age-graded theory of informal social control (Sampson and Laub, 1993). In the second, they presented a revised theory. This newer volume was consistent with their earlier thinking but, based on a longer view of adulthood (to age 70), introduced a more elaborate theoretical model (Laub and Sampson, 2003 [Chapter 44 in this part]). In both works, the authors emphasized the importance of a life-course perspective that explained both continuity and change in behavior.

In their first book, *Crime in the Making*, Robert Sampson and John Laub (1993) set forth an important paradigm for understanding the development of crime (see the discussion of their work in the introduction to Part V). Notably, they subtitled their book *Pathways and Turning Points Through Life*. By "pathways," they were alluding to the fact that people can be caught in life trajectories that form a continuous line over a substantial time period. With regard to crime, they noted that the trajectory may extend to childhood, and that there is "considerable evidence that antisocial behavior is relatively stable across stages of the life course" (p. 11). By "turning points," they were raising the possibility that entering a criminal trajectory is not a life sentence. Research shows that many offenders experience points at which they change and turn away from crime. In short, offending is characterized by both continuity *and* change. For Sampson and Laub and other scholars, the theoretical task was thus to explain what creates continuity along criminal pathways and what creates change at key turning points in life.

Sampson and Laub (1993) hypothesized that a complex set of factors combine to entrench a child on an antisocial pathway (see also Sampson and Laub, 1994). They recognized that some of these conditions are the kinds of individual differences that psychologists emphasize, such as a difficult temperament and early conduct problems. Other factors, however, are rooted in the disadvantaged and unstable social context into which a child is born. These individual and social structural conditions coalesce to foster a family life that is marked by ineffective and rejecting parenting, to decrease the chances that children will succeed at and be committed to school, and to cause children to seek out and be exposed to delinquent peers and siblings. For youths with these individual traits and social experiences, delinquent behavior is the likely result. In turn, delinquency weakens social bonds, which makes future delinquency and then adult crime more likely. Incarceration also might occur, which increases criminality because it, too, diminishes the strength of ties to conventional society.

This interactive process—one in which social bonds weakened by crime in turn lead to more crime that further weakens bonds, and so on—creates the kind of "cumulative continuity" described by Moffitt (1993). As time goes on

and chances to establish social bonds—at school, at work, within the family, with a marriage—are "knifed off," a criminal life course becomes probable. Even so, Sampson and Laub did not believe that people are consigned to be life-course-persistent offenders. Change, not just continuity, is possible.

In turning away from crime, the key agent of change is establishing conventional social bonds. Here, Sampson and Laub, once students of Travis Hirschi in graduate school, essentially apply Hirschi's social bond theory to their life-course perspective. As a general principle, the presence or absence of social ties determines whether people offend. By implication, if offenders are able to secure social bonds, they will experience renewed social control that has the potential to change their behavior. Social bonds can arise during childhood (e.g., attachment to parents), in adolescence (e.g., ties to school), and in adulthood (e.g., marriage). Importantly, Sampson and Laub note that change is induced when offenders acquire *quality* social bonds—such as a "good" marriage or a "good" job.

Ironically, Sampson and Laub's use of social bond theory placed them in opposition to the theoretical position that Hirschi had later taken with Michael Gottfredson. Recall that Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990 [Chapter 17]) believed that social bonds have no causal impact on crime. Any relationship between bonds and crime was seen to be spurious—a correlation that exists because low self-control produces both weak bonds and criminal involvement (see also Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1995). In contrast, although not disputing that individual differences such as self-control are important, Sampson and Laub (1993, 1995) asserted that social bonds—fresh ties to conventional society—might allow people to overcome their criminal propensities and divert them from crime. Although not plentiful, research suggests that Sampson and Laub's version is more correct, with both low self-control *and* social bonds implicated in crime across the life course (Evans et al., 1997; Wright et al., 1999; see also Laub et al., 2006; Pratt, 2016; Sampson and Laub, 1990, 1993; however, see Hirschi and Gottfredson, 2000).

Again, Gottfredson and Hirschi argue that the trait of low self-control creates continuity of offending across time. Moffitt proposes that some offenders—the LCPs—also show remarkable continuity in antisocial conduct from childhood onward. But she suggests that another group—the ALs—are marked by change: into offending in adolescence and then out of offending in adulthood. By contrast, Sampson and Laub contend that *the same individual* can experience both continuity and change in offending.

This focus on change is even more pronounced in Laub and Sampson's (2003 [Chapter 44 in this part]) revised theory (see also Laub et al., 2006; Sampson and Laub, 2005). As noted, this work was based on a follow-up of the original Glueck sample until age 70. Previous longitudinal projects traced offenders into their 30s and perhaps into middle age. But Laub and Sampson pursued a true *life-course* study! Notably, from this vantage point, their analysis showed that virtually all offenders desisted from crime. For even the most persistent criminals, it appears that change is inevitable.

In their revised theory, Laub and Sampson retain the core thesis that structural turning points—marriage, employment, military service—are potential sources of informal social control that foster desistance from crime. But they broaden this perspective to argue that such structural positions involve multiple processes:

> Each of these creates new situations that (1) knife off the past from the present; (2) provide not only supervision and monitoring but opportunities for social support and growth; (3) bring change and structure routine activities; and (4) provide an opportunity for identity transformation. (Laub and Sampson, 2003: 148–149)

Let us take marriage as an example. Once married, an offender's life is potentially transformed. The spouse provides emotional support to help with stresses and rough times. She (or "he" in other samples) also curtails her husband's comings and goings. She makes sure he goes to work and arrives home for dinner. These prosocial routine activities give him little chance to be in situations where trouble arises (e.g., in a bar getting drunk, on the street at night). His affiliations with former "bad friends" are stopped (see also Warr, 1998, 2002), especially if his wife and he move to a

"better" neighborhood. When children are born, the now ex-offender might have a new "script" or "identity" as a "provider" and "good father." Crime thus becomes an increasingly distant pastime as the *process of desistance* runs its course.

At times, desistance thus happens virtually "by default." There is no conscious decision to stop being a criminal. In Laub and Sampson's (2003: 147) sample, many "men made a commitment to go straight without even realizing it. Before they knew it, they had invested so much in a marriage or a job that they did not want to risk losing their investment." But in an important—and theoretically controversial—assertion, Laub and Sampson also suggest that the decision to desist (or, for that matter, to persist in crime) also involves *human agency*.

"Human agency" is a somewhat vague concept, but its core idea is that people are not unthinking billiard balls who are bounced in and out of crime by the deterministic forces around them. Instead, we all have a subjective reality that affects our choices. To be sure, circumstances bound and shape what we do, for we can only choose from the options available to us. For many inner-city youngsters, the choice is not between going to Harvard or joining a gang but perhaps between working in a minimum-wage job or stealing and partying on the streets. Even so, in situations where a turning point is possible, offenders can act to move out of crime or to stay in crime. For example, when a good marital relationship is possible, a person can prove unfaithful, disdain his wife's wishes by getting drunk with his buddies, neglect his children, and walk off his job in defiance of a boss he dislikes. Or he can resist these temptations and build a marriage that persists and makes crime less meaningful.

The theoretical idea of "human agency" is noteworthy for two other reasons. First, it is a way of "bringing motivation back in" to control theory. Recall that control theorists such as Hirschi (1969 [Chapter 16]) take the motivation or predisposition to offend for granted; humans by their nature are gratification seekers and must be restrained from pursuing their self-interest through crime. Laub and Sampson (2003 [Chapter 44]), however, assert that humans act in part because of what they "will" themselves to do. They can decide to act differently—or not. Human agency thus is a conduit for the motivation to change.

Importantly, unlike with many alternative theories, Laub and Sampson do not see motivation as an enduring trait or orientation. And unlike with rational choice theories, they do not see motivation as a cold calculation of costs and benefits. Rather, motivation is situational and emerges from the person-environment interaction. For example, if a male offender falls into a close relationship with a woman, he may be inspired to "go straight." If this relationship had not occurred, the motivation to desist may not have arisen. Conversely, meeting a potential partner is no guarantee that conformity will follow. The offender still has to exercise agency; he still has to develop the will to change.

Second, the idea that change in a criminal life course is contingent on situated choices and human agency challenges more neatly packaged developmental theories—most notably Moffitt's theory of ALs and LCPs. The very idea that crime is "developmental" presupposes that offenders enter into and out of crime in a *predictable sequence of steps*. Their lives are held to unfold in defined stages.

By contrast, Laub and Sampson (2003) believe that adult development is, to an important degree, *unpredictable*. Thus, it is impossible to predict from childhood factors how long "life-course-persistent offenders" will in fact persist in their criminality in adulthood. All offenders eventually give up crime—age, or death, seems to have that effect. But at what precise point people desist is a matter of good fortune (e.g., getting a good job), situational dynamics, and human agency. Thus, while desistance is a process with definable patterns, it has an emergent, contingent quality that is not captured by the notion of universal developmental sequences. Put another way, lives do not "unfold" but rather are shaped and chosen, often in idiosyncratic ways.

Looking back at their work, Laub and Sampson (2020) have alerted scholars to attend to the macrosocial changes that affect today's cohorts making the transition to adulthood. The subjects from the Gluecks' data used in their analyses were born between 1924–1934 and grew up in lower-class Boston neighborhoods (Sampson and Laub, 1993). The study participants were all white, likely because only about 3% of Boston's population was black (Cullen et al., 2019). Life was quite different then. As Laub and Sampson (2020) document, most men were married by age 32 and did so young, with the median age of first marriage at 21. Eighty percent of the sample did not have a high school degree; but after World War II, many options for entry-level jobs existed that had the potential for advancement. A military draft existed and access to the armed forces readily available.

By contrast, in 21st-century America, social bonds integral to the transition to adulthood are less accessible, having implications for desistance from crime. Thus, young adults today marry less often and later (nearly 30 years of age). Deindustrialization depleted inner cities of good-paying jobs for low-skilled workers in the 1970s and beyond, and high salaries are now increasingly tied to high educational credentials. With an all-volunteer military, even access to the armed forces is restricted to those with a high-school diploma and the absence of a "significant criminal record" (Laub and Sampson, 2020: 166). An added challenge is the expansion of criminal justice control, including rising arrest rates, the mass imprisonment movement, and the spread of debilitating collateral consequences (see Alexander, 2010 [Chapter 30]; Clear, 2007 [Chapter 29]). Incarceration now has become a "normative transition" in the life course of many impoverished men: "Nearly 60% of black males born in 1965–1969 and without a high school education could be expected to do time in prison by the end of the 1990s" (Laub and Sampson, 2020: 167). Future tests of Laub and Sampson's theory will need to investigate this transformation in the nature of adult social bonds—especially conditioned by racial inequality—and assess how these changes affect involvement in crime across the life course.

Understanding Change

In developing their concept of "human agency," Laub and Sampson (2003) have revealed the importance of understanding not only why people enter crime ("onset") and stay in crime ("persistence") but also why they leave crime ("desistance"). Scholars subsequently explored the desistance process in detail (see, e.g., Maruna, 2001; Maruna and Roy, 2007; Sullivan, 2013).

Findings from longitudinal research on the timing of social bonds and desistance complicate this issue. Sampson and Laub (1993) assume that a good marriage or job acts as a catalyst for desistance. Studies report, however, that the causal ordering may be reversed—that offenders desist from crime first and then acquire prosocial bonds such as a spouse and employment (see Skardhamar and Savolainen, 2014; Skardhamar et al., 2015). At the very least, it may be that a key element in desistance is that offenders approach such opportunities to establish social bonds with a subjective openness for change to occur. This insight suggests the importance of examining what offenders are thinking as they progress through their life course. Several scholars have explored the role of cognitions in the decision to desist from crime.

Thus, Peggy Giordano, Stephen Cernkovich, and Jennifer Rudolph (2002) offer a theory of cognitive transformation. They agree with Sampson and Laub's (1993) initial theory that acquiring social bonds, such as a marriage or a job, facilitates desistance. But they also concur with their revised theory, discussed just above, that human agency is involved in this process. Social bonds are not simply magically developed or unwillingly imposed. Career criminals must take advantage of opportunities for desistance. A quality relationship or a decent job can be lost if an offender

chooses not to return home at night or to show up for work. In essence, then, offenders must exercise human agency by choosing to change.

However, for Giordano et al. (2002), such human agency can be unpackaged into four "cognitive shifts." In their perspective, offenders encounter potential social bonds, which they call "hooks for change." These might include a budding intimate relationship or an offer of employment. But these opportunities may be forfeited unless an offender experiences a fundamental "cognitive transformation." This transformation, again, occurs through four steps.

First, the offender must possess a general openness to change. Second, the person must look favorably upon a specific hook for change and see embracing this hook (e.g., a new relationship) as being "fundamentally incompatible with continued deviation" (Giordano et al., 2002: 1001). Third, the offender must begin to fashion a new conventional identity, what Giordano and colleagues call a "replacement self" (p. 1001). Fourth, the individual must come to see continued wayward conduct negatively. Thus, a "deviant behavior or lifestyle" is no longer viewed as "positive, viable, or even personally relevant" (p. 1002). In this way, the motivation to deviate vanishes as the offender is cognitively transformed into a conventional member of society.

In short, desistance is a dynamic, interactive process that involves both opportunities or hooks for change and active efforts by offenders to interpret their world and themselves differently. The value of Giordano et al.'s framework is that it moves us beyond the broad view that offenders exercise human agency to an understanding of what such agency might entail. For them, human agency is not simply willpower but ways of thinking—cognitive shifts—that motivate offenders to act differently.

Other scholars have offered a related but distinct explanation for desistance: offenders quit crime when they change their identity. As might be recalled from Chapter 20, Shadd Maruna (2001) argued that whether individuals persisted in a criminal career depended on their narrative identity—the story they told about who they were and what their future might hold. Offenders who embraced a "condemnation script" believed that they were "doomed to deviance" and could not escape a life in crime—and thus they did not. By contrast, offenders who manifested a "redemption script" stated that their real self was good and not criminal, were optimistic about their ability to overcome dismal economic prospects, and believed that their life could serve a higher purpose. This identity led them to abandon crime and to try to "make good" in their lives.

Another identity theory of desistance has been proposed by Ray Paternoster and Shawn Bushway (2009 [Chapter 45 in this volume]). They argue that offenders make rational choices and use human agency—"intentional self-change"—to stop offending (2009: 1106; see also Paternoster et al., 2015). They also observe, however, that the decision to persist or desist from crime is shaped by how offenders view their current and future identities. At some point, if being a criminal is seen as too costly, desistance is possible.

Paternoster and Bushway propose that active criminals have a "working self" or identity as a person who commits crime—that is, as a drug addict, thief, or perhaps robber. Acting consistently with this identity provides motivation to keep offending. Behavior is thus seen as an expression of who offenders think they are. Note that this assertion differs from the view that, like the rest of us, criminals are socialized into a dominant conventional morality and thus must neutralize controls in order to break the law (see Sykes and Matza, 1957 [Chapter 15]). Rather, a criminal identity is seen to provide a rationale that makes offending uncomplicated: "I am just being me."

Paternoster and Bushway also note, however, that individuals have not only a current working self but also a future "possible self." This future identity can play a crucial role in desistance in two ways. Positively, offenders might look ahead and see themselves someday being a spouse, a parent, employed, and a respected neighbor. Such a prosocial

self can be a pull out of crime. Negatively, offenders might look ahead and see themselves as constantly in and out of prison, strung out on drugs, victimized by the violent criminals they encounter on the streets, accumulating no wealth or property to speak of, and without a family to love them. The authors call this the "feared self," and it can serve as a powerful push out of crime.

For Paternoster and Bushway, desistance is not a discrete event or turning point but rather a process that typically unfolds over a period of time. A likely sequence is that as offenders persist in crime, the payoffs decline and the costs become harder to bear. When dissatisfactions with being a criminal crystallize, they provide the impetus to seek change. The feared self is no longer a distant possibility but a fast-approaching future. Avoiding the feared self thus motivates the change to a more prosocial identity. As this transformation occurs, offenders' preferences also switch from those conducive to crime (e.g., love of getting high and the excitement of being on the street) to those conducive to conformity (e.g., love of relaxing at home and the honor of making an honest living). Further, as part of their identity change, offenders choose to spend more time with people who are prosocial and supportive of their movement away from crime. This support, which may be provided by family members, coworkers, or treatment counselors, isolates them from criminal influences. Put another way, their prosocial identity—perhaps as a good worker, good parent, and good community member—organizes their life in a new direction. Tentatively—taking "baby steps" in which they gradually experiment with being conventional—they relinquish their working self and, in their own mind, become a different person. At this point, the choice to desist reflects who they are—their identity—and emerges as the most rational course to follow.

The Future of Developmental Criminology

Developmental theories are now center stage in criminology. Even if one takes issue with the main theories that have been set forth, the fundamental point underlying these perspectives is indisputable: Crime is a dynamic process that potentially begins in childhood and occurs across the life course. Accordingly, the challenge for all theoretical criminology is to explain continuity and/or change in criminal involvement. For many years, however, traditional theories remained largely silent on these key issues. This does not mean that traditional perspectives have no value. But it does mean that their credibility will be judged, in large part, by how well they are able to address the key life-course issues of continuity and change in offending. Sampson and Laub provide an example of how this might be accomplished when they use social bond theory to illuminate why offenders become entrenched in and escape from a criminal trajectory. Further, they show how key constructs—in their case social bonds—vary by age; other theories should follow this lead in exploring how their core causal variables are also "age graded" (e.g., consider the value of an age-graded general strain theory or identity theory). In any event, for the foreseeable future, the developmental or life-course perspective almost certainly will be the dominant theoretical and research paradigm in the field of criminology (Cullen, 2011).

References

Agnew, Robert. 1997. “Stability and Change in Crime over the Life Course: A Strain Theory Explanation.” In Terence P. Thornberry (ed.), *Developmental Theories of Crime and Delinquency: Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **7**, pp. 101–132. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Agnew, Robert and Timothy Brezina. 2012. *Juvenile Delinquency: Causes and Control*, 4th edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

Alexander, Michelle. 2010. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in an Age of Colorblindness*. Ne York: The New Press.

Benson, Michael L. 2013. *Crime and the Life Course: An Introduction*, 2nd edition. New York: Routledge.

Blokland, Arjan A. J., Daniel S. Nagin, and Paul Nieuwbeerta. 2005. “Life Span Offending Trajectories of a Dutch Conviction Cohort.” *Criminology* **43**: 919–954.

Bowlby, John. 1969. *Attachment and Loss, Volume I: Attachment*. New York: Basic.

Bushway, Shawn D. 2013. “Life-Course-Persistent Offenders.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 189–204. New York: Oxford University Press.

Caspi, Avshalom and Terrie E. Moffitt. 1995. “The Continuity of Maladaptive Behavior: From Description to Understanding in the Study of Antisocial Behavior.” In Dante Cicchetti and Donald J. Cohen (eds.), *Manual of Developmental Psychology*, pp. 472–511. New York: John Wiley.

Clear, Todd R. 2007. *Imprisoning Communities: How Mass Incarceration Makes Disadvantaged Neighborhoods Worse*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Cullen, Francis T. 2011. “Beyond Adolescence-Limited Criminology: Choosing Our Future—The American Society of Criminology 2010 Sutherland Address.” *Criminology* **49**: 287–330.

Cullen, Francis T., Michael L. Benson, and Matthew D. Makarios. 2012. “Developmental and Life-Course Theories of Offending.” In Brandon C. Welsh and David P. Farrington (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Crime Prevention*, pp. 23–45. New York: Oxford University Press.

Cullen, Francis T., Cecilia Chouhy, Leah Butler, and Heejin Lee. 2019. “Beyond White Criminology.” In James D. Unnever, Shaun L. Gabbidon, and Cecilia Chouhy (eds.), *Building a Black Criminology: Race, Theory, and Crime—Advances in Criminological Theory*. Volume **24**, pp. 45–75. New York: Routledge.

Evans, T. David, Francis T. Cullen, Velmer S. Burton, Jr., R. Gregory Dunaway, and Michael L. Benson. 1997. “The Social Consequences of Self-Control: Testing the General Theory of Crime.” *Criminology* **35**: 475–500.

Farrington, David P. 1995. “The Development of Offending and Antisocial Behavior from Childhood: Key Findings from the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development.” *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* **36**: 929–964.

____. ed. 2005. *Integrated Development and Life-Course Theories of Offending: Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **14**. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

____. 2003. “Key Results from the First Forty Years of the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development.” In Terence P. Thornberry and Marvin D. Krohn (eds.), *Taking Stock of Delinquency: An Overview of Findings from Contemporary Longitudinal Studies*, pp. 137–183. New York: Kluwer/Plenum.

Farrington, David P. and Rolf Loeber. 1999. “Transatlantic Replicability of Risk Factors in the Development of Delinquency.” In Patricia Cohen, Cheryl Slomkowski, and Lee N. Robins (eds.), *Historical and Geographical Influences on Psychopathology*, pp. 299–329. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

____. 2013. “Two Approaches to Developmental/Life Course Theorizing.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 226–252. New York: Oxford University Press.

Federal Bureau of Investigation. 2016. *Crime in the United States, 2015: Uniform Crime Reports*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice. https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2015/crime-in-the-u.s.-2015

Giordano, Peggy C., Stephen A. Cernkovich, and Jennifer L. Rudolph. 2002. “Gender, Crime, and Desistance: Toward a Theory of Cognitive Transformation.” *American Journal of Sociology* **107**: 990–1064.

Glueck, Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck. 1950. *Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency*. New York: Commonwealth Fund.

Gottfredson, Michael R. 2006. “The Empirical Status of Control Theory in Criminology.” In Francis T. Cullen, John Paul Wright, and Kristie R. Blevins (eds.), *Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **15**, pp. 77–100. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Gottfredson, Michael R. and Travis Hirschi. 1990. *A General Theory of Crime*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Hirschi, Travis. 1969. *Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hirschi, Travis and Michael R. Gottfredson. 1995. “Control Theory and the Life-Course Perspective.” *Studies on Crime and Crime Prevention* **4**: 131–142.

____. 2000. “In Defense of Self-Control.” *Theoretical Criminology* **4**: 55–69.

Laub, John H. and Robert J. Sampson. 2020. “Life-Course and Developmental Criminology: Looking Back, Moving Forward—ASC Division of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology Inaugural David P. Farrington Lecture, 2017.” *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology* **6**: 158–171.

____. 2003. *Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives: Delinquent Boys to Age 70*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

____. 1991. “The Sutherland-Glueck Debate: On the Sociology of Criminological Knowledge.” *American Journal of Sociology* **96**: 1402–1440.

Laub, John H., Robert J. Sampson, and Gary Sweeten. 2006. “Assessing Sampson and Laub’s Life-Course Theory of Crime.” In Francis T. Cullen, John Paul Wright, and Kristie R. Blevins (eds.), *Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **15**, pp. 313–333. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Le Blanc, Marc and Rolf Loeber. 1998. “Developmental Criminology Updated.” In Michael Tonry (ed.), *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, Volume 23, pp. 115–198. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Loeber, Rolf and David P. Farrington, eds. 1998. *Serious and Violent Juvenile Offenders: Risk Factors and Successful Interventions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Loeber, Rolf, David P. Farrington, Magda Stouthamer-Loeber, Terrie E. Moffitt, Avshalom Caspi, Helene Raskin White, Evelyn H. Wei, and Jennifer M. Beyers. 2003. “The Development of Male Offending: Key Findings from 14 Years of the Pittsburgh Youth Study.” In Terence Thornberry and Marvin D. Krohn (eds.), *Taking Stock of Delinquency: An Overview of the Findings from Contemporary Longitudinal Studies*, pp. 93–136. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.

Loeber, Rolf and Marc Le Blanc. 1990. “Toward a Developmental Criminology.” In Michael Tonry and Norval Morris (eds.), *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, Volume **12**, pp. 375–473. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Loeber, Rolf and Magda Stouthamer-Loeber. 1996. “The Development of Offending.” *Criminal Justice and Behavior* **23**: 12–24.

Maruna, Shadd. 2001. *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Maruna, Shadd and Kevin Roy. 2007. “Amputation or Reconstruction? Notes on the Concept of ‘Knifing Off’ and Desistance from Crime.” *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* **23**: 104–124.

Moffitt, Terrie. 1993. “Adolescence-Limited and Life-Course-Persistent Antisocial Behavior: A Developmental Taxonomy.” *Psychological Review* **100**: 674–701.

____. 2018. “Male Antisocial Behaviour in Adolescence and Beyond.” *Nature Human Behavior* **2**: 177–186.

____. 2006. “A Review of Research on the Taxonomy of Life-Course Persistent Versus Adolescence-Limited Antisocial Behavior.” In Francis T. Cullen, John Paul Wright, and Kristie R. Blevins (eds.), *Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **15**, pp. 277–311. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Moffitt, Terrie E., Avshalom Caspi, Michael Rutter, and Phil A. Silva. 2001. *Sex Differences in Antisocial Behavior: Conduct Disorder, Delinquency, and Violence in the Dunedin Longitudinal Study*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Paternoster, Ray, Ronet Bachman, Shawn Bushway, Erin Kerrison, and Daniel O’Connell. 2015. “Human Agency and Explanations of Criminal Desistance: Arguments for a Rational Choice Theory.” *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology* **1**: 209–235.

Paternoster, Ray and Shawn Bushway. 2009. “Desistance and the Feared Self: Toward an Identity Theory of Criminal Desistance.” *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* **99**: 1103–1156.

Piquero, Alex R. and Terrie E. Moffitt. 2005. “Explaining the Facts of Crime: How the Developmental Taxonomy Replies to Farrington’s Invitation.” In David P. Farrington (ed.), *Integrated Developmental and Life-Course Theories of Offending: Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **14**, pp. 51–72. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Pratt, Travis C. 2016. “A Self-Control/Life-Course Theory of Criminal Behavior.” *European Journal of Criminology* **13**: 129–146.

Robins, Lee N. and Eric Wish. 1977. “Childhood Deviance as a Developmental Process: A Study of 223 Urban Black Men from Birth to 18.” *Social Forces* **56**: 448–473.

Sampson, Robert J. 1997. “The Embeddedness of Child and Adolescent Development: A Community-Level Perspective on Urban Violence.” In Joan McCord (ed.), *Violence and Childhood in the Inner City*, pp. 31–77. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Sampson, Robert J. and John H. Laub. 1990. “Crime and Deviance over the Life Course: The Salience of Adult Social Bonds.” *American Sociological Review* **44**: 609–627.

____. 1992. “Crime and Deviance over the Life Course.” *Annual Review of Sociology* **18**: 63–84.

____. 1993. *Crime in the Making: Pathways and Turning Points Through Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

____. 2005. “A Life-Course View of the Development of Crime.” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* **602**: 12–45.

____. 1995. “Understanding Variability in Lives Through Time: Contributions of Life-Course Criminology.” *Studies on Crime and Crime Prevention* **4**: 143–158.

____. 1994. “Urban Poverty and the Family Context of Delinquency: A New Look at Structure and Process in a Classic Study.” *Child Development* **65**: 523–540.

Skardhamar, T. and Jukka Savolainen. 2014. “Changes in Criminal Offending Around the Time of Job Entry: A Study of Employment and Desistance.” *Criminology* **52**: 263–291.

Skardhamar, Torbjørn, Jukka Savolainen, Kjersti N. Aase, and Torkild H. Lyngstad. 2015. “Does Marriage Reduce Crime?” In Michael Tonry (ed.), *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, Volume 44, pp. 385–446. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sullivan, Christopher J. 2013. “Change in Offending Across the Life Course.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 205–225. New York: Oxford University Press.

Sykes, Gresham M. and David Matza. 1957. “Techniques of Neutralization.” *American Sociological Review* **22**: 664–670.

Tanner-Smith, Emily, Sandra Jo Wilson, and Mark W. Lipsey. 2013. “Risk Factors and Crime.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 89–111. New York: Oxford University Press.

Taylor, Claire. 2001. “The Relationship Between Social and Self-Control: Tracing Hirschi’s Criminological Career.” *Theoretical Criminology* **5**: 369–388.

Thornberry, Terence P. 1987. “Toward an Interactional Theory of Delinquency.” *Criminology* **25**: 863–891.

Thornberry, Terence P. and Marvin D. Krohn, eds. 2003. *Taking Stock of Delinquency: An Overview of Findings from Contemporary Longitudinal Studies*. New York: Kluwer Academic.

Walsh, Anthony and Kevin M. Beaver, eds. 2009. *Biosocial Criminology: New Directions in Theory and Research*. New York: Routledge.

Warr, Mark. 2002. *Companions in Crime: The Social Aspects of Criminal Conduct*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

____. 1998. “Life-Course Transitions and Desistance from Crime.” *Criminology* **36**: 183–216.

Wilson, James Q. and Richard J. Herrnstein. 1985. *Crime and Human Nature*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Wright, Bradley R. Entner, Avshalom Caspi, Terrie E. Moffitt, and Phil A. Silva. 1999. “Low Self-Control, Social Bonds, and Crime: Social Causation, Social Selection, or Both?” *Criminology* **37**: 479–514.

Wright, John Paul, Stephen G. Tibbetts, and Leah E. Daigle. 2008. *Criminals in the Making: Criminality Across the Life Course*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

43.
Pathways in the Life Course to Crime*

Terrie E. Moffitt

Moffitt begins her article by arguing that there are two major types of antisocial persons: a small group of persons who engage in antisocial behavior at a high rate over much of their life ("life-course-persistent" offenders) and a much larger group of those who limit their antisocial behavior to the adolescent years ("adolescence-limited" offenders). She then develops a theory of antisocial behavior for each group. The theory designed to explain life-course-persistent antisocial behavior is most relevant to this section. It represents one of the best attempts to integrate biological, psychological, and sociological variables in the recent literature.

At the heart of the theory is the assertion that persistent antisocial behavior is a product of the interaction between individual traits and the social environment. Moffitt begins by describing certain traits that predispose one to antisocial behavior, and she argues that such traits are a function of biological factors and the early family environment. She then describes the various ways in which individual traits and the social environment mutually influence one another. In certain cases, an escalating process occurs: negative environments exacerbate negative traits and negative traits increase the likelihood of exposure to negative environments. By late adolescence, those traits conducive to antisocial behavior may be so entrenched that changing the person's behavior becomes extremely difficult. A pattern of persistent antisocial behavior has been established. Adolescence-limited antisocial behavior, however, is not fueled by individual traits, and, for reasons indicated in the selection, such behavior is abandoned in early adulthood.

Moffitt's theory is distinguished by its description of the various ways in which individual traits and the social environment may interact with one another to produce persistent antisocial behavior. It is also one of a group of theories that attempts to explain patterns in antisocial behavior over the life course. As Moffitt points out, most traditional crime theories focus on the explanation of adolescent crime; they do not attempt to explain patterns of offending over time.

Moffitt's theory is compatible with much data on antisocial behavior, and key portions of her theory have received qualified empirical support (see Moffitt, 1997, 2006, 2018; Moffitt et al., 2001; Nagin et al., 1995; Piquero and Moffitt, 2005). Still, it remains to be seen if offenders fall into two neatly packaged groups. Some studies suggest that there might be more than two categories of criminals (D'Unger et al., 1998; Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1998), while scholars such as Hirschi and Gottfredson (2000) have maintained that offenders differ not qualitatively but only in the degree to which they exhibit criminal propensities.

References

D'Unger, Amy V., Kenneth C. Land, Patricia L. McCall, and Daniel S. Nagin. 1998. "How Many Latent Classes of Delinquent/Criminal Careers? Results from Mixed Poisson Regression Analyses." *American Journal of Sociology* **103**: 1593–1630.

Hirschi, Travis and Michael R. Gottfredson. 2000. "In Defense of Self-Control." *Theoretical Criminology* **4**: 55–69.

Loeber, Rolf and Magda Stouthamer-Loeber. 1998. “Development of Juvenile Aggression and Violence: Some Misconceptions and Controversies.” *American Psychologist* **53**: 242–259.

Moffitt, Terrie E. 1993. “Adolescence-Limited and Life-Course-Persistent Antisocial Behavior: A Developmental Taxonomy.” *Psychological Review* **100**: 674–701.

____. 1997. “Adolescence-Limited and Life-Course-Persistent Offending: A Complementary Pair of Developmental Theories.” In Terence P. Thornberry (ed.), *Developmental Theories of Crime and Delinquency, Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume 7, pp. 11–54. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

____. 2006. “A Review of Research on the Taxonomy of Life-Course Persistent Versus Adolescence-Limited Antisocial Behavior.” In *Francis T. Cullen, John Paul Wright, and Kristie R. Blevins (eds.), Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **15**, pp. 277–311. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

____. 2018. “Male Antisocial Behaviour in Adolescence and Beyond.” *Nature Human Behavior* **2**:177–186.

Moffitt, Terrie E., Avshalom Caspi, Michael Rutter, and Phil A. Silva. 2001. *Sex Differences in Antisocial Behavior: Conduct Disorder, Delinquency, and Violence in the Dunedin Longitudinal Study*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Nagin, Daniel S., David P. Farrington, and Terrie E. Moffitt. 1995. “Life-Course Trajectories of Different Types of Offenders.” *Criminology* **33**: 111–139.

Piquero, Alex R. and Terrie E. Moffitt. 2005. “Explaining the Facts of Crime: How the Developmental Taxonomy Replies to Farrington’s Invitation.” In David P. Farrington (ed.), *Integrated Developmental and Life-Course Theories of Offending: Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **14**, pp. 51–72. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

There are marked individual differences in the stability of antisocial behavior. Many people behave antisocially, but their antisocial behavior is temporary and situational. In contrast, the antisocial behavior of some people is very stable and persistent. Temporary, situational antisocial behavior is quite common in the population, especially among adolescents. Persistent, stable antisocial behavior is found among a relatively small number of males whose behavior problems are also quite extreme. The central tenet of this article is that temporary versus persistent antisocial persons constitute two qualitatively distinct types of persons. In particular, I suggest that juvenile delinquency conceals two qualitatively distinct categories of individuals, each in need of its own distinct theoretical explanation….

For delinquents whose criminal activity is confined to the adolescent years, the causal factors may be proximal, specific to the period of adolescent development, and theory must account for the discontinuity in their lives. In contrast, for persons whose adolescent delinquency is merely one inflection in a continuous lifelong antisocial course, a theory of antisocial behavior must locate its causal factors early in their childhoods and must explain the continuity in their troubled lives….

Figure 43.1 depicts the typological thesis to be argued here. A small group of persons is shown engaging in antisocial behavior of one sort or another at every stage of life. I have labeled these persons *life-course-persistent* to reflect the continuous course of their antisocial behavior. A larger group of persons fills out the age-crime curve with crime careers of shorter duration. I have labeled these persons *adolescence-limited* to reflect their more temporary involvement in antisocial behavior. Thus, timing and duration of the course of antisocial involvement are the defining features in the natural histories of the two proposed types of offenders….

FIGURE 43.1 Hypothetical Illustration of the Changing Prevalence of Participation in Antisocial Behavior Across the Life Course (The solid line represents the known curve of crime over age. The arrows represent the duration of participation in antisocial behavior by individuals)

Reprinted from Terrie E. Moffitt, "Adolescence-Limited and Life-Course-Persistent Antisocial Behavior: A Developmental Taxonomy" in *Psychological Review* 100. Copyright © 1993 by American Psychological Association. Adapted with permission.

Life-Course-Persistent Antisocial Behavior

Continuity of Antisocial Behavior Defined

As implied by the label, continuity is the hallmark of the small group of life-course-persistent antisocial persons. Across the life course, these individuals exhibit changing manifestations of antisocial behavior: biting and hitting at age 4, shoplifting and truancy at age 10, selling drugs and stealing cars at age 16, robbery and rape at age 22, and fraud and child abuse at age 30; the underlying disposition remains the same, but its expression changes form as new social opportunities arise at different points in development. This pattern of continuity across age is matched also by cross-situational consistency: life-course-persistent antisocial persons lie at home, steal from shops, cheat at school, fight in bars, and embezzle at work (Farrington, 1991; Loeber, 1982; Loeber and Baicker-McKee, 1989; Robins, 1966, 1978; White et al., 1990)....

Beginnings: Neuropsychological Risk for Difficult Temperament and Behavioral Problems

If some individuals' antisocial behavior is stable from preschool to adulthood as the data imply, then investigators are compelled to look for its roots early in life, in factors that are present before or soon after birth. It is possible that the etiological chain begins with some factor capable of producing individual differences in the neuropsychological functions of the infant nervous system. Factors that influence infant neural development are myriad, and many of them have been empirically linked to antisocial outcomes.

One possible source of neuropsychological variation that is linked to problem behavior is disruption in the ontogenesis of the fetal brain. Minor physical anomalies, which are thought to be observable markers for hidden anomalies in neural development, have been found at elevated rates among violent offenders and subjects with antisocial personality traits (Fogel, Mednick, and Michelson, 1985; E. Kandel, Brennan, and Mednick, 1989; Paulhus and Martin 1986). Neural development may be disrupted by maternal drug abuse, poor prenatal nutrition, or pre or postnatal exposure to toxic agents (Needleman and Beringer, 1981; Rodning, Beckwith, and Howard, 1989; Stewart, 1983). Even brain insult suffered because of complications during delivery has been empirically linked to later violence and antisocial behavior in carefully designed longitudinal studies (E. Kandel and Mednick, 1991; Szatmari, Reitsma-Street, and Offord, 1986). In addition, some individual differences in neuropsychological health are heritable in origin (Borecki and Ashton, 1984; Martin, Jardine, and Eaves, 1984; Plomin, Nitz, and Rowe, 1990; Tambs, Sundet, and Magnus, 1984; Vandenberg, 1969). Just as parents and children share facial resemblances, they share some structural and functional similarities within their nervous systems. After birth, neural development may be disrupted by neonatal deprivation of nutrition, stimulation, and even affection (Cravioto and Arrieta, 1983; Kraemer, 1988; Meany, Aitken, van Berkel, Bhatnagar, and Sapolsky, 1988). Some studies have pointed to child abuse and neglect as possible sources of brain injury in the histories of delinquents with neuropsychological impairment (Lewis, Shanok, Pincus, and Glaser, 1979; Milner and McCanne, 1991; Tarter, Hegedus, Winsten, and Alterman, 1984).

There is good evidence that children who ultimately become persistently antisocial do suffer from deficits in neuropsychological abilities. I have elsewhere reviewed the available empirical and theoretical literatures: the link

between neuropsychological impairment and antisocial outcomes is one of the most robust effects in the study of antisocial behavior (Moffitt, 1990b; Moffitt and Henry, 1991; see also Hirschi and Hindelang, 1977). Two sorts of neuropsychological deficits are empirically associated with antisocial behavior: verbal and "executive" functions. The verbal deficits of antisocial children are pervasive, affecting receptive listening and reading, problem solving, expressive speech and writing, and memory. In addition, executive deficits produce what is sometimes referred to as a compartmental learning disability (Price, Daffner, Stowe, and Mesulam, 1990), including symptoms such as inattention and impulsivity. These cognitive deficits and antisocial behavior share variance that is independent of social class, race, test motivation, and academic attainment (Lynam, Moffitt, and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1993; Moffitt, 1990b). In addition, the relation is not an artifact of slow witted delinquents' greater susceptibility to detection by police; undetected delinquents have weak cognitive skills too (Moffitt and Silva, 1988a).

The evidence is strong that neuropsychological deficits are linked to the kind of antisocial behavior that begins in childhood and is sustained for lengthy periods. In a series of articles (Moffitt, 1990a; Moffitt and Henry, 1989; Moffitt and Silva, 1988b), I have shown that poor verbal and executive functions are associated with antisocial behavior, if it is extreme and persistent. In these studies, adolescent New Zealand boys who exhibited symptoms of both conduct disorder and attention-deficit disorder with hyperactivity (ADDH) scored very poorly on neuropsychological tests of verbal and executive functions and had histories of extreme antisocial behavior that persisted from age 3 to age 15. Apparently, their neuropsychological deficits were as long standing as their antisocial behavior; at ages 3 and 5 these boys had scored more than a standard deviation below the age norm for boys on the Baviev and McCarthy tests of motor coordination and on the Stanford-Binet test of cognitive performance. Contrast groups of boys with single diagnoses of either conduct disorder or ADDH did not have neuropsychological deficits or cognitive-motor delays, but neither were their behavior problems stable over time.

In a study designed to improve on measurement of executive functions (White, Moffitt, Caspi, Jeglum, Needles, and Stouthamer-Loeber, in press), we gathered data on self-control and impulsivity for 430 Pittsburgh youths. Twelve measures were taken from multiple sources (mother, teacher, self, and observer) by using multiple methods (rating scales, performance tests, computer games, Q sorts, and videotaped observations). A linear composite of the impulsivity measures was strongly related to the 3-year longevity of antisocial behavior, even after controlling for IQ, race, and social class. Boys who were very delinquent from ages 10 to 13 scored significantly higher on impulsivity than both their nondelinquent and temporarily delinquent agemates. Taken together, the New Zealand and Pittsburgh longitudinal studies suggest that neuropsychological dysfunctions that manifest themselves as poor scores on tests of language and self-control—and as the inattentive, overactive, and impulsive symptoms of ADDH—are linked with the early childhood emergence of aggressive antisocial behavior and with its subsequent persistence.

Neuropsychological variation and the "difficult" infant. Before describing how neuropsychological variation might constitute risk for antisocial behavior, it is useful to define what is meant here by neuropsychological. By combining neuro with psychological, I refer broadly to the extent to which anatomical structures and physiological processes within the nervous system influence psychological characteristics such as temperament, behavioral development, cognitive abilities, or all three. For example, individual variation in brain function may engender differences between children in activity level, emotional reactivity, or self-regulation (temperament); speech, motor coordination, or impulse control (behavioral development); and attention, language, learning, memory, or reasoning (cognitive abilities).

Children with neurological difficulties severe enough to constitute autism, severe physical handicap, or profound mental retardation are usually identified and specially treated by parents and professionals. However, other infants have subclinical levels of problems that affect the difficulty of rearing them, variously referred to as difficult temperament, language or motor delays, or mild cognitive deficits. Compromised neuropsychological functions are

associated with a variety of consequences for infants' cognitive and motor development as well as for their personality development (Rothbart and Derryberry, 1981). Toddlers with subtle neuropsychological deficits may be clumsy and awkward, overactive, inattentive, irritable, impulsive, hard to keep on schedule, delayed in reaching developmental milestones, poor at verbal comprehension, deficient at expressing themselves, or slow at learning new things (Rutter, 1977, 1983; Thomas and Chess, 1977; Wender, 1971).

Hertzig (1983) has described an empirical test of the proposed relationship between neurological damage and difficult behavior in infancy. She studied a sample of 66 low-birth-weight infants from intact middle-class families. Symptoms of brain dysfunction detected during neurological examinations were significantly related to an index of difficult temperament taken at ages 1, 2, and 3 (Thomas and Chess, 1977; the index comprised rhythmicity, adaptability, approach-withdrawal, intensity, and mood). The parents of the children with neurological impairment and difficult temperament more often sought help from child psychiatrists as their children grew up, and the most frequent presenting complaints were immaturity, overactivity, temper tantrums, poor attention, and poor school performance. Each of these childhood problems has been linked by research to later antisocial outcomes (cf. Moffitt, 1990a, 1990b). Importantly, the impairments of the children with neural damage were not massive; their mean IQ score was 96 (only 4 points below the population mean). Hertzig's study showed that even subtle neurological deficits can influence an infant's temperament and behavior, the difficulty of rearing the infant, and behavioral problems in later childhood.

Child-environment covariation in nature: A source of interactional continuity. Up to this point, I have emphasized in this article the characteristics of the developing child as if environments were held constant. Unfortunately, children with cognitive and temperamental disadvantages are not generally born into supportive environments, nor do they even get a fair chance of being randomly assigned to good or bad environments. Unlike the aforementioned infants in Hertzig's (1983) study of temperament and neurological symptoms, most low-birthweight infants are not born into intact, middle-class families. Vulnerable infants are disproportionately found in environments that will not be ameliorative because many sources of neural maldevelopment co-occur with family disadvantage or deviance.

Indeed, because some characteristics of parents and children tend to be correlated, parents of children who are at risk for antisocial behavior often inadvertently provide their children with criminogenic environments (Sameroff and Chandler, 1975). The intergenerational transmission of severe antisocial behavior has been carefully documented in a study of three generations (Huesmann et al., 1984). In that study of 600 subjects, the stability of individuals' aggressive behavior from age 8 to age 30 was exceeded by the stability of aggression across the generations: from grandparent to parent to child. Thus, with regard to risk for antisocial behavior, nature does not follow a 2 × 2 design with equal cell sizes.

Parents and children resemble each other on temperament and personality. Thus, parents of children who are difficult to manage often lack the necessary psychological and physical resources to cope constructively with a difficult child (Scarr and McCartney, 1983; Snyder and Patterson, 1987). For example, temperamental traits such as activity level and irritability are known to be partly heritable (Plomin, Chipuer, and Loehlin, 1990). This suggests that children whose hyperactivity and angry outbursts might be curbed by firm discipline will tend to have parents who are inconsistent disciplinarians; the parents tend to be impatient and irritable too. The converse is also true: Empirical evidence has been found for a relationship between variations in parents' warmth and infants' easiness (Plomin, Chipuer, and Loehlin, 1990).

Parents and children also resemble each other on cognitive ability. The known heritability of measured intelligence (Loehlin, 1989; Plomin, 1990) implies that children who are most in need of remedial cognitive stimulation will have parents who may be least able to provide it. Moreover, parents' cognitive abilities set limits on their own educational

and occupational attainment (Barrett and Depinet, 1991). As one consequence, families whose members have below-average cognitive capacities will often be least able financially to obtain professional interventions or optimal remedial schooling for their at-risk children.

Even the social and structural aspects of the environment may be stacked against children who enter the world at risk. Plomin and Bergeman (1990) have shown that there are genetic components to measures that are commonly used by developmental psychologists to assess socialization environments. For example, the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment scale, the Moos Family Environment scales, and the Holmes and Rahe scales of stressful life events all revealed the influence of heritable factors when they were examined with behavior genetic research designs (Plomin and Bergeman, 1990). Vulnerable children are often subject to adverse homes and neighborhoods because their parents are vulnerable to problems too (cf. Lahey et al., 1990).

Importantly, although examples from behavior genetics research have been cited in the previous three paragraphs, the perverse compounding of children's vulnerabilities with their families' imperfections does not require that the child's neuropsychological risk arise from any genetic disposition. In fact, for my purposes, it is immaterial whether parent-child similarities arise from shared genes or shared homes. A home environment wherein prenatal care is haphazard, drugs are used during pregnancy, and infants' nutritional needs are neglected is a setting where sources of children's neuropsychological dysfunction that are clearly environmental coexist with a criminogenic social environment.

Problem child–problem parent interactions and the emergence of antisocial behaviors. I believe that the juxtaposition of a vulnerable and difficult infant with an adverse rearing context initiates risk for the life-course-persistent pattern of antisocial behavior. The ensuing process is a transactional one in which the challenge of coping with a difficult child evokes a chain of failed parent-child encounters (Sameroff and Chandler, 1975). The assertion that children exert important effects on their social environments is useful in understanding this hypothetical process (Bell and Chapman, 1986). It is now widely acknowledged that personality and behavior are shaped in large measure by interactions between the person and the environment (cf. Buss, 1987; Plomin, DeFries, and Loehlin, 1977; Scarr and McCartney, 1983). One form of interaction may play a particularly important role both in promoting an antisocial style and in maintaining its continuity across the life course: *Evocative* interaction occurs when a child's behavior evokes distinctive responses from others (Caspi et al., 1987).

Children with neuropsychological problems evoke a challenge to even the most resourceful, loving, and patient families. For example, Tinsley and Parke (1983) have reviewed literature showing that low-birth-weight, premature infants negatively influence the behavior of their caretakers; they arrive before parents are prepared, their crying patterns are rated as more disturbing and irritating, and parents report that they are less satisfying to feed, less pleasant to hold, and more demanding to care for than healthy babies. Many parents of preterm infants hold unrealistic expectations about their children's attainment of developmental milestones, and these may contribute to later dysfunctional parent-child relationships (Tinsley and Parke, 1983). More disturbing, an infant's neurological health status has been shown to be related to risk for maltreatment and neglect (Friedrich and Boriskin, 1976; Frodi et al., 1978; Hunter, Kilstrom, Kraybill, and Loda, 1978; Milowe and Lowrie, 1964; Sandgrund, Gaines, and Green, 1974).

Numerous studies have shown that a toddler's problem behaviors may affect the parents' disciplinary strategies as well as subsequent interactions with adults and peers (Bell and Chapman, 1986; Chess and Thomas, 1987). For example, children characterized by a difficult temperament in infancy are more likely to resist their mothers' efforts to control them in early childhood (Lee and Bates, 1985). Similarly, mothers of difficult boys experience more problems in their efforts to socialize their children. Maccoby and Jacklin (1983) showed that over time these mothers reduce their efforts to actively guide and direct their children's behavior and become increasingly less involved in the

teaching process. In a study of unrelated mothers and children, K. E. Anderson, Lytton, and Romney observed conduct-disordered and nonproblem boys interacting with mothers of conduct-disordered and nonproblem sons in unrelated pairs. The conduct-disordered boys evoked more negative reactions from both types of mothers than did normal boys, but the two types of mothers did not differ from each other in their negative reactions. It may well be that early behavioral difficulties contribute to the development of persistent antisocial behavior by evoking responses from the interpersonal social environment, responses that exacerbate the child's tendencies (Goldsmith, Bradshaw, and Rieser-Danner, 1986; Lytton, 1990). "The child acts; the environment reacts; and the child reacts back in mutually interlocking evocative interaction" (Caspi et al., 1987, p. 308).

Such a sequence of interactions would be most likely to produce lasting antisocial behavior problems if caretaker reactions were more likely to exacerbate than to ameliorate children's problem behavior. To my knowledge, students of child effects have not yet tested for interactions between child behavior and parental deviance or poor parenting, perhaps because very disadvantaged families are seldom studied with such designs. Nonetheless, some data suggest that children's predispositions toward antisocial behavior may be exacerbated under deviant rearing conditions. In the New Zealand longitudinal study, there was a significant interaction effect between children's neuropsychological deficit and family adversity on one type of delinquent act: aggressive confrontation with a victim or adversary. Among the 536 boys in the sample, the 75 boys who had both low neuropsychological test scores and adverse home environments earned a mean aggression score more than four times greater than that of boys with either neuropsychological problems or adverse homes (Moffitt, 1990b). The index of family adversity included parental characteristics such as poor mental health and low intelligence as well as socioeconomic status. Behavior-genetic adoption studies of antisocial behavior often report a similar pattern of findings, wherein the highest rates of criminal outcomes are found for adoptees whose foster parents, as well as their biological parents, were deviant (e.g. Mednick, Gabrielli, and Hutchings, 1984). Thus, children's predispositions may evoke exacerbating responses from the environment and may also render them more vulnerable to criminogenic environments.

If the child who "steps off on the wrong foot" remains on an ill-starred path, subsequent stepping-stone experiences may culminate in life-course-persistent antisocial behavior. For life-course-persistent antisocial individuals, deviant behavior patterns later in life may thus reflect early individual differences that are perpetuated or exacerbated by interactions with the social environment: first at home, and later at school. Quay (1987) summarized this as "this youth is likely to be at odds with everyone in the environment, and most particularly with those who must interact with him on a daily basis to raise, educate, or otherwise control him.... This pattern is the most troublesome to society, seems least amenable to change, and has most pessimistic prognosis for adult adjustment (p. 121)."

However, inauspicious beginnings do not complete the story. In the New Zealand study, for example, a combination of preschool measures of antisocial behavior and cognitive ability was able to predict 70% of the cases of conduct disorder at age 11 but at the cost of a high false-positive rate (White et al., 1990). The next section explores the specific interactional processes that nourish and augment the life-course-persistent antisocial style beyond childhood.

Maintenance and Elaboration over the Life Course: Cumulative Continuity, Contemporary Continuity, and Narrowing Options for Change

In the previous section, the concept of evocative person-environment interaction was called on to describe how children's difficult behaviors might affect encounters with their parents. Two additional types of interaction may help to explain how the life-course-persistent individual's problem behavior, once initiated, might promote its own

continuity and pervasiveness. *Reactive* interaction occurs when different youngsters exposed to the same environment experience it, interpret it, and react to it in accordance with their particular style. For example, in interpersonal situations where cues are ambiguous, aggressive children are likely to mistakenly attribute harmful intent to others and then act accordingly (Dodge and Frame, 1982). *Proactive* interaction occurs when people select or create environments that support their styles. For example, antisocial individuals appear to be likely to affiliate selectively with antisocial others, even when selecting a mate. Some evidence points to nonrandom mating along personality traits related to antisocial behavior (Buss, 1984), and there are significant spouse correlations on conviction for crimes (e.g., Baker, Mack, Moffitt, and Mednick, 1989).

The three types of person-environment interactions can produce two kinds of consequences in the life course: *cumulative consequences* and *contemporary consequences* (Caspi and Bem, 1990). Early individual differences may set in motion a downhill snowball of cumulative continuities. In addition, individual differences may themselves persist from infancy to adulthood, continuing to influence adolescent and adult behavior in a proximal contemporary fashion. Contemporary continuity arises if the life-course-persistent person continues to carry into adulthood the same underlying constellation of traits that got him into trouble as a child, such as high activity level, irritability, poor self-control, and low cognitive ability.

The roles of cumulative and contemporary continuities in antisocial behavior have been explored by Caspi, Bem, and Elder (1989; Caspi et al., 1987), using data from the longitudinal Berkeley Guidance Study. They identified men who had a history of temper tantrums during late childhood (when tantrums are not developmentally normative). Then they traced the continuities and consequences of this personality style across the subsequent 30 years of the subjects' lives and into multiple diverse life domains: education, employment, and marriage. A major finding was that hot-tempered boys who came from middle-class homes suffered a progressive deterioration of socioeconomic status as they moved through the life course. By age 40, their occupational status was indistinguishable from that of men born into the working class. A majority of them held jobs of lower occupational status than those held by their fathers at a comparable age. Did these men fail occupationally because their earlier ill-temperedness started them down a particular path (cumulative consequences) or because their current ill-temperedness handicapped them in the world of work (contemporary consequences)?

Cumulative consequences were implied by the effect of childhood temper on occupational status at midlife: Tantrums predicted lower educational attainment, and educational attainment, in turn, predicted lower occupational status. Contemporary consequences were implied by the strong direct link between ill-temperedness and occupational stability. Men with childhood tantrums continued to be hot-tempered in adulthood, where it got them into trouble in the world of work. They had more erratic work lives, changing jobs more frequently and experiencing more unemployment between ages 18 and 40. Ill-temperedness also had a contemporary effect on marital stability. Almost half (46%) of the men with histories of childhood tantrums had divorced by age 40 compared with only 22% of other men.

Elsewhere, I describe in detail some of the patterns of interaction between persons and their social environments that may promote antisocial continuity across time and across life domains (Caspi and Moffitt, in press-b). Two sources of continuity deserve emphasis here because they narrow the options for change. These processes are (a) failing to learn conventional prosocial alternatives to antisocial behavior and (b) becoming ensnared in a deviant life-style by crime's consequences. These concepts have special implications for the questions of why life-course-persistent individuals fail to desist from delinquency as young adults and why they are so impervious to intervention.

A restricted behavioral repertoire. This theory of life-course-persistent antisocial behavior asserts that the causal sequence begins very early and the formative years are dominated by chains of cumulative and contemporary continuity. As a consequence, little opportunity is afforded for the life-course-persistent antisocial individual to learn

a behavioral repertoire of prosocial alternatives. Thus, one overlooked and pernicious source of continuity in antisocial behavior is simply a lack of recourse to any other options. In keeping with this prediction, Vitaro, Gagnon, and Tremblay (1990) have shown that aggressive children whose behavioral repertoires consist almost solely of antisocial behaviors are less likely to change over years than are aggressive children whose repertoires comprise some prosocial behaviors as well.

Life-course-persistent persons miss out on opportunities to acquire and practice prosocial alternatives at each stage of development. Children with poor self-control and aggressive behavior are often rejected by peers and adults (Coie, Belding, and Underwood, 1988; Dodge, Coie, and Brakke, 1982; Vitaro et al., 1990). In turn, children who have learned to expect rejection are likely in later settings to withdraw or strike out preemptively, precluding opportunities to affiliate with prosocial peers (Dodge and Frame, 1982; Dodge and Newman, 1981; LaFrenier and Sroufe, 1985; Nasby, Hayden, and DePaulo, 1980). Such children are robbed of chances to practice conventional social skills. Alternatively, consider this sequence of narrowing options: Behavior problems at school and failure to attain basic math and reading skills place a limit on the variety of job skills that can be acquired and thereby cut off options to pursue legitimate employment as an alternative to the underground economy (Farrington, Gallagher, Morley, Ledger, and West, 1986; Maughan, Gray, and Rutter, 1985; Moffitt, 1990a). Simply put, if social and academic skills are not mastered in childhood, it is very difficult to later recover lost opportunities.

Becoming ensnared by consequences of antisocial behavior. Personal characteristics such as poor self-control, impulsivity, and inability to delay gratification increase the risk that antisocial youngsters will make irrevocable decisions that close the doors of opportunity. Teenaged parenthood, addiction to drugs or alcohol, school dropout, disabling or disfiguring injuries, patchy work histories, and time spent incarcerated are *snares* that diminish the probabilities of later success by eliminating opportunities for breaking the chain of cumulative continuity (Cairns and Cairns, 1991; J. Q. Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985). Similarly, labels accrued early in life can foreclose later opportunities; an early arrest record or a "bad" reputation may rule out lucrative jobs, higher education, or an advantageous marriage (Farrington, 1977; Klein, 1986; West, 1982). In short, the behavior of life-course-persistent antisocial persons is increasingly maintained and supported by narrowing options for conventional behavior.

Interventions with life-course-persistent persons have met with dismal results (Lipton, Martinson, and Wilks, 1975; Palmer, 1984; Sechrest, White, and Brown, 1979). This is not surprising, considering that most interventions are begun relatively late in the chain of cumulative continuity. The forces of continuity are formidable foes (Caspi and Moffitt, in press-a). After a protracted deficient learning history, and after options for change have been eliminated, efforts to suppress antisocial behavior will not automatically bring prosocial behavior to the surface in its place. Now-classic research on learning shows conclusively that efforts to extinguish undesirable behavior will fail unless alternative behaviors are available that will attract reinforcement (Azrin and Holz, 1966). My analysis of increasingly restricted behavioral options suggests the hypothesis that opportunities for change will often be actively transformed by life-course-persistents into opportunities for continuity: Residential treatment programs provide a chance to learn from criminal peers, a new job furnishes the chance to steal, and new romance provides a partner for abuse. This analysis of life-course-persistent antisocial behavior anticipates disappointing outcomes when such antisocial persons are thrust into new situations that purportedly offer the chance "to turn over a new leaf."

The Reason for Persistence: Traits, Environments, and Developmental Processes

According to some accounts of behavioral continuity, an ever present underlying trait generates antisocial outcomes at every point in the life span (e.g., Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). By other accounts, antisocial behavior is sustained by environmental barriers to change (e.g., Bandura, 1979, pp. 217–224). In this theory of life-course-persistent antisocial behavior, neither traits nor environments account for continuity.

True, the theory begins with a trait: variation between individuals in neuropsychological health. The trait is truly underlying in that it seldom comes to anyone's attention unless an infant is challenged by formal examinations; it is manifested behaviorally as variability in infant temperament, developmental milestones, and cognitive abilities.

Next, the theory brings environments into play. Parents and other people respond to children's difficult temperaments and developmental deficits. In nurturing environments, toddlers' problems are often corrected. However, in disadvantaged homes, schools, and neighborhoods, the responses are more likely to exacerbate than amend. Under such detrimental circumstances, difficult behavior is gradually elaborated into conduct problems and a dearth of prosocial skills. Thus, over the years, an antisocial personality is slowly and insidiously constructed. Likewise, deficits in language and reasoning are incrementally elaborated into academic failure and a dearth of job skills. Over time, accumulating consequences of the youngster's personality problems and academic problems prune away the options for change.

This theory of life-course-persistent antisocial behavior emphasizes the constant process of reciprocal interaction between personal traits and environmental reactions to them. The original attribute is thus elaborated on during development, to become a syndrome that remains conceptually consistent, but that gains new behavioral components (Caspi and Bem, 1990). Through that process, relatively subtle childhood variations in neuropsychological health can be transformed into an antisocial style that pervades all domains of adolescent and adult behavior. It is this infiltration of the antisocial disposition into the multiple domains of a life that diminishes the likelihood of change.

When in the life course does the potential for change dwindle to nil? How many person-environment interactions must accumulate before the life-course-persistent pattern becomes set? I have argued that a person-environment interaction process is needed to predict emerging antisocial behavior, but after some age will the "person" main effect predict adult outcomes alone? An answer to these questions is critical for prevention efforts. The well-documented resistance of antisocial personality disorder to treatments of all kinds seems to suggest that the life-course-persistent style is fixed sometime before age 18 (Suedfeld and Landon, 1978). Studies of crime careers reveal that it is very unusual for males to first initiate crime after adolescence, suggesting that if an adult is going to be antisocial, the pattern must be established by late adolescence (Elliott, Huizinga, and Menard, 1989).[1] At the same time, efforts to predict antisocial outcomes from childhood conduct problems yield many errors (e.g., White et al., 1990). These errors seem to suggest that antisocial styles become set sometime after childhood....

Adolescence-Limited Antisocial Behavior

Discontinuity: The Most Common Course of Antisocial Behavior

As implied by the proffered label, discontinuity is the hallmark of teenaged delinquents who have no notable history of antisocial behavior in childhood and little future for such behavior in adulthood. However, the brief tenure of their delinquency should not obscure their prevalence in the population or the gravity of their crimes. In contrast with the rare life-course-persistent type, adolescence-limited delinquency is ubiquitous. Several studies have shown that about one third of males are arrested during their lifetime for a serious criminal offense, whereas fully four fifths of males have police contact for some minor infringement (Farrington, Ohlin, and Wilson, 1986). Most of these police contacts are made during the adolescent years. Indeed, numerous rigorous self-report studies have now documented that it is statistically aberrant to refrain from crime during adolescence (Elliott et al., 1983; Hirschi, 1969; Moffitt and Silva, 1988c).

Compared with the life-course-persistent type, adolescence-limited delinquents show relatively little continuity in their antisocial behavior. Across age, change in delinquent involvement is often abrupt, especially during the periods of onset and desistance. For example, in my aforementioned longitudinal study of a representative sample of boys, 12% of the youngsters were classified as new delinquents at age 13; they had no prior history of antisocial behavior from age 5 to age 11. Between age 11 and age 13, they changed from below the sample average to 1.5 standard deviations above average on self-reported delinquency (Moffitt, 1990a). By age 15, another 20% of this sample of boys had joined the newcomers to delinquency despite having no prior history of antisocial behavior (Moffitt, 1991). Barely into mid-adolescence, the prevalence rate of markedly antisocial boys had swollen from 5% at age 11 to 32% at age 15. When interviewed at age 18, only 7% of the boys denied all delinquent activities. By their mid-20s, at least three fourths of these new offenders are expected to cease all offending (Farrington, 1986).

Adolescence-limited delinquents may also have sporadic, crime-free periods in the midst of their brief crime "careers." Also, in contrast with the life-course-persistent type, they lack consistency in their antisocial behavior across situations. For example, they may shoplift in stores and use drugs with friends but continue to obey the rules at school. Because of the chimeric nature of their delinquency, different reporters (such as self, parent, and teacher) are less likely to agree about their behavior problems when asked to complete rating scales or clinical interviews (Loeber, Green, Lahey, and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1990; Loeber and Schmaling, 1985).

These observations about temporal instability and cross-situational *in*consistency are more than merely descriptive. They have implications for a theory of the etiology of adolescence-limited delinquency. Indeed, the flexibility of most delinquents' behavior suggests that their engagement in deviant life-styles may be under the control of reinforcement and punishment contingencies.

Unlike their life-course-persistent peers, whose behavior was described as inflexible and refractory to changing circumstances, adolescence-limited delinquents are likely to engage in antisocial behavior in situations where such responses seem profitable to them, but they are also able to abandon antisocial behavior when prosocial styles are more rewarding. They maintain control over their antisocial responses and use antisocial behavior only in situations where it may serve an instrumental function. Thus, principles of learning theory will be important for this theory of the cause of adolescence-limited delinquency.

A theory of adolescence-limited delinquency must account for several empirical observations: modal onset in early adolescence, recovery by young adulthood, widespread prevalence, and lack of continuity. Why do youngsters with no history of behavior problems in childhood suddenly become antisocial in adolescence? Why do they develop antisocial problems rather than other difficulties? Why is delinquency so common among teens? How are they able to spontaneously recover from an antisocial life-style within a few short years?

Just as the childhood onset of life-course-persistent persons compelled me to look for causal factors early in their lives, the coincidence of puberty with the rise in the prevalence of delinquent behavior compels me to look for clues in adolescent development. Critical features of this developmental period are variability in biological age, the increasing importance of peer relationships, and the budding of teenagers' self-conscious values, attitudes, and aspirations. These developmental tasks form the building blocks for a theory of adolescence-limited delinquency.

Beginnings: Motivation, Mimicry, and Reinforcement

Why do adolescence-limited delinquents begin delinquency? The answer advanced here is that their delinquency is "social mimicry" of the antisocial style of life-course-persistent youths. The concept of social mimicry is borrowed from ethology. Social mimicry occurs when two animal species share a single niche and one of the species has cornered the market on a resource that is needed to promote fitness (Moynihan, 1968). In such circumstances, the "mimic" species adopts the social behavior of the more successful species to obtain access to the valuable resource. For example, cowbird chicks, who are left by their mothers to be reared in the nests of unsuspecting parent birds, learn to behave like the parent birds' own true chicks and thus stimulate the parents to drop food their way. Social mimicry may also allow some species to safely pass among a more successful group and thus share access to desired resources. For example, some monkey species have learned to mimic bird calls. One such species of monkeys, rufous-naped tamarins, is able to share the delights of ripe fruit after a tree has been located by tyrant flycatchers, whose superior avian capacities in flight and distance vision better equip them to discover bearing trees. Similarly, zebras are sensitive to the social signals of impalas and gazelles and thus benefit from the latter species' superior sensitivity to approaching predators (E. O. Wilson, 1975).

If social mimicry is to explain why adolescence-limited delinquents begin to mimic the antisocial behavior of their life-course-persistent peers, then, logically, delinquency must be a social behavior that allows access to some desirable resource. I suggest that the resource is mature status, with its consequent power and privilege.

Before modernization, biological maturity came at a later age, social adult status arrived at an earlier age, and rites of passage more clearly delineated the point at which youths assumed new roles and responsibilities. In the past century, improved nutrition and health care have decreased the age of biological maturity at the rate of three tenths of a year per decade (Tanner, 1978; Wyshak and Frisch, 1982). Simultaneously, modernization of work has delayed the age of labor-force participation to ever later points in development (Empey, 1978; Horan and Hargis, 1991; Panel on Youth of the President's Science Advisory Committee, 1974). Thus, secular changes in health and work have lengthened the duration of adolescence. The ensuing gap leaves modern teenagers in a 5- to 10-year role vacuum (Erikson, 1960). They are biologically capable and compelled to be sexual beings, yet they are asked to delay most of the positive aspects of adult life (see Buchanan, Eccles, and Becker, 1992, for a review of studies of the compelling influence of pubertal hormones on teens' behavior and personality). In most American states, teens are not allowed to work or get a driver's license before age 16, marry or vote before age 18, or buy alcohol before age 21, and they are admonished to delay having children and establishing their own private dwellings until their education is completed at age 22, sometimes more than 10 years after they attain sexual maturity. They remain financially and socially dependent on their families of origin and are allowed few decisions of any real import. Yet they want desperately to

establish intimate bonds with the opposite sex, to accrue material belongings, to make their own decisions, and to be regarded as consequential by adults (Csikszentmihalyi and Larson, 1984). Contemporary adolescents are thus trapped in a *maturity gap*, chronological hostages of a time warp between biological age and social age.

This emergent phenomenology begins to color the world for most teens in the first years of adolescence. Steinberg has shown that, between ages 10 and 15, a dramatic shift in youngsters' self-perceptions of autonomy and self-reliance takes place. Moreover, the timing of the shift for individuals is connected with their pubertal maturation (Steinberg, 1987; Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986; Udry, 1988). At the time of biological maturity, salient pubertal changes make the remoteness of ascribed social maturity painfully apparent to teens. This new awareness coincides with their promotion into a high school society that is numerically dominated by older youth. Thus, just as teens begin to feel the discomfort of the maturity gap, they enter a social reference group that has endured the gap for 3 to 4 years and has already perfected some delinquent ways of coping with it. Indeed, several researchers have noted that this life course transition into high school society may place teens at risk for antisocial behavior. In particular, exposure to peer models, when coupled with puberty, is an important determinant of adolescence-onset cases of delinquency (Caspi, Lynam, Moffitt, and Silva, 1993; Magnusson, 1988; Simmons and Blyth, 1987).

Life-course-persistent youngsters are the vanguard of this transition. Healthy adolescents are capable of noticing that the few life-course-persistent youths in their midst do not seem to suffer much from the maturity gap. (At a prevalence rate of about 5%, one or two such experienced delinquents in every classroom might be expected.) Already adept at deviance, life-course-persistent youths are able to obtain possessions by theft or vice that are otherwise inaccessible to teens who have no independent incomes (e.g., cars, clothes, drugs, or entry into adults-only leisure settings). Life-course-persistent boys are more sexually experienced and have already initiated relationships with the opposite sex. Life-course-persistent boys appear relatively free of their families of origin; they seem to go their own way, making their own rules. As evidence that they make their own decisions, they take risks and do dangerous things that parents could not possibly endorse. As evidence that they have social consequence in the adult world, they have personal attorneys, social workers, and probation officers; they operate small businesses in the underground economy; and they have fathered children (Weiher, Huizinga, Lizotte, and Van Kammen, 1991). Viewed from within contemporary adolescent culture, the antisocial precocity of life-course-persistent youths becomes a coveted social asset (cf. Finnegan, 1990a, 1990b; Jessor and Jessor, 1977; Silbereisen and Noack, 1988). Like the aforementioned bird calls that were mimicked by hungry tamarin monkeys, antisocial behavior becomes a valuable technique that is demonstrated by life-course-persistents and imitated carefully by adolescence-limiteds. The effect of peer delinquency on the onset of delinquency is among the most robust facts in criminology research (Elliott and Menard, in press; Jessor and Jessor, 1977; Reiss, 1986; Sarnecki, 1986). However, is there evidence consistent with a social mimicry interpretation? I describe the evidence in the next section.

Social mimicry and the relationships between life-course-persistent and adolescence-limited delinquents. One hypothesized by-product of the maturity gap is a shift during early adolescence by persistent antisocial youth from peripheral to more influential positions in the peer social structure. This shift should occur as aspects of the antisocial style become more interesting to other teens. In terms of its epidemiology, delinquent participation shifts from being primarily an individual psychopathology in childhood to a normative group social behavior during adolescence and then back to psychopathology in adulthood. Consider that the behavior problems of the few pioneering antisocial children in an age cohort must develop on an individual basis; such early childhood pioneers lack the influence of delinquent peers (excepting family members). However, near adolescence, a few boys join the life-course-persistent ones, then a few more, until a critical mass is reached when almost all adolescents are involved in some delinquency with age peers. Elliott and Menard (in press) have analyzed change in peer group membership from age 11 to age 24 in a national probability sample. Their data show a gradual population drift from membership in nondelinquent peer groups to membership in delinquent peer groups up to age 17; the trend reverses

thereafter. For example, 78% of 11-year-olds reported no or minimal delinquency among their friends. In contrast, 66% of 17-year-olds reported substantial delinquency on the part of the friends in their group.

The word *friends* in the previous sentence seems to imply a personal relationship between life-course-persistents and adolescence-limiteds that is implausible. Much evidence suggests that, before adolescence, life-course-persistent antisocial children are ignored and rejected by other children because of their unpredictable, aggressive behavior (Coie et al., 1988; Dodge et al., 1982). After adolescence has passed, life-course-persistent adults are often described as lacking the capacity for loyalty or friendship (Cleckley, 1976; Robins, 1985). At first, these observations may seem contrary to my assertion that life-course-persistents assume social influence over youths who admire and emulate their style during adolescence. However, it is important to recall that social mimicry required no exchange of affection between the successful birds and their monkey mimics. In this theory, adolescents who wish to prove their maturity need only notice that the style of life-course-persistents resembles adulthood more than it resembles childhood. Then they need only observe antisocial behavior closely enough and long enough to imitate it successfully. What is contended is that adolescence-limited youths as models, and life-course-persistent teens should regard themselves as magnets for other teens. Neither perception need involve reciprocal liking between individuals.

A modeling role would imply that measures of exposure to delinquent peers (e.g., knowledge of their delinquent behavior or time spent in proximity to them) should be better predictors of self-delinquency than measures of relationship quality (e.g., shared attitudes or attachment to delinquent peers). Few studies have parsed peer-delinquency effects into separate components, but two findings consistent with this prediction have been reported from the National Youth Survey, a representative sample of more than 500 teens. Agnew (1991) examined relationship characteristics in interaction with levels of peer delinquency. He argued that attachment to peers should encourage deviance if peers are delinquent but discourage it if they are not. Agnew's results showed that such interaction terms were good predictors. However, the results also showed that time spent with delinquent peers was a stronger unique predictor of self-delinquency than the interaction between peer attachment and peer crime. Warr and Stafford (1991) found that the knowledge of friends' delinquent behavior was 2.5 to 5 times more important for self-delinquency than friends' attitudes about delinquency. (This pattern has been replicated in another sample by Nagin and Paternoster, 1991.) Moreover, the effect of peer delinquency was direct; it was not mediated by influencing the respondents' attitudes to be more like those of deviant peers. These findings are not consistent with the notion that teens take up delinquency after pro-delinquency attitudes are transferred in the context of intimate social relations. Rather, Warr and Stafford concluded that the data on peer effects are best interpreted in terms of imitation or vicarious reinforcement.

A magnet role would imply that children who were rejected and ignored by others should experience newfound "popularity" as teens, relative to their former rejected status. That is, life-course-persistent youth should encounter more contacts with peers during adolescence when other adolescents draw near so as to imitate their life-style. Some research is consistent with this interpretation. For example, in a study of 450 students in middle school, aggressive youths who were rejected by their peers reported that they did not feel lonely, whereas submissive rejected youths did feel lonely (Parkhurst and Asher, 1992). Similarly, aggressive seventh-graders in the Carolina Longitudinal Study were rated as popular as often as nonaggressive youths by both teachers and themselves and were as likely as other youths to be nuclear members of peer groups (Cairns, Cairns, Neckerman, Gest, and Gariepy, 1988). In their review of peer-relationship studies, Coie, Dodge, and Kupersmidt (1990) noted that the relationship between overt aggression and peer rejection is weaker or absent in adolescent samples compared with child samples. Findings such as these suggest that aggressive teens experience regular contacts with peers, however short-lived. Similarly, in the Oregon Youth Study, rejection by peers at age 10 was prognostic of greater involvement with delinquent peers 2 years later (Dishion, Patterson, Stoolmiller, and Skinner, 1991). Although the Oregon researchers interpreted their results as suggesting that aggressive children seek delinquent friends, their data are equally consistent with my

interpretation that aggressive youths begin to serve as a magnet for novice delinquents during early adolescence. Definitive sociometric research must follow up aggressive-rejected children to test whether they develop networks in adolescence that include late-onset delinquents of the adolescence-limited type.

Researchers from the Carolina Longitudinal Study have carefully documented that boys with an aggressive history do participate in peer networks in adolescence but that the networks are not very stable (Cairns et al., 1988). Consistent with a social mimicry hypothesis, delinquent groups have frequent membership turnover. In addition, the interchanges between network members are characterized by much reciprocal antisocial behavior (Cairns et al., 1988). Reiss and Farrington (1991) have shown that the most experienced high-rate young offenders tend to recruit different co-offenders for each offense.

Life-course-persistents serve as core members of revolving networks, by virtue of being role models or trainers for new recruits (Reiss, 1986). They exploit peers as drug customers, as fences, as lookouts, or as sexual partners. Such interactions among life-course-persistent and adolescence-limited delinquents may represent a symbiosis of mutual exploitation. Alternatively, life-course-persistent offenders need not even be aware of all of the adolescence-limited youngsters who imitate their style. Unlike adolescence-limited offenders, who appear to need peer support for crime, life-course-persistent offenders are willing to offend alone (Knight and West, 1975). The point is that the phenomena of "delinquent peer networks" and "co-offending" during the adolescent period do not necessarily connote supportive friendships that are based on intimacy, trust, and loyalty, as is sometimes assumed. Social mimicry of delinquency can take place if experienced offenders actively educate new recruits. However, it can also take place if motivated learners merely observe antisocial models from afar.

Reinforcement of delinquency by its "negative" consequences. For teens who become adolescence-limited delinquents, antisocial behavior is an effective means of knifing-off childhood apron strings and of proving that they can act independently to conquer new challenges (Erikson, 1960). Hypothetical reinforcers for delinquency include damaging the quality of intimacy and communication with parents, provoking responses from adults in positions of authority, finding ways to look older (such as by smoking cigarettes, being tattooed, playing the big spender with ill-gotten gains), and tempting fate (risking pregnancy, driving while intoxicated, or shoplifting under the noses of clerks). None of these putative reinforcers may seem very pleasurable to the middle-aged academic, but each of the aforementioned consequences is a precious resource to the teenager and can serve to reinforce delinquency. Bloch and Niederhoffer (1958) have offered an anthropological perspective: "It is almost as if the contemporary young person, in the absence of puberty rituals and ordeals, is moved to exclaim: If you don't care to test us, then we will test ourselves! (p. 28)."

I suggest that every curfew violated, car stolen, drug taken, and baby conceived is a statement of personal independence and thus a reinforcer for delinquent involvement. Ethnographic interviews with delinquents reveal that proving maturity and autonomy are strong personal motives for offending (e.g., Goldstein, 1990). Such hypothetical reinforcing properties have not been systematically tested for most types of delinquent acts. However, epidemiological studies have confirmed that adolescent initiation of tobacco, alcohol, and drug abuse are reinforced because they symbolize independence and maturity to youth (D. Kandel, 1980; Mausner and Platt, 1971).

In summary, in this narrative account of the etiology of adolescent-onset delinquency I have emphasized three conditions: motivation, mimicry, and reinforcement. I have suggested that a secular change in the duration of adolescence has generated an age-dependent motivational state. In addition, life-course-persistent antisocial models must be available so that their delinquent behaviors can be imitated. Finally, adolescents' fledgling attempts to mimic antisocial styles will continue if they are socially reinforced by the "negative consequences" of crime.

Why Doesn't Every Teenager Become Delinquent?

The proffered theory of adolescence-limited delinquency regards this sort of delinquency as an adaptive response to contextual circumstances. As a consequence, the theory seems to predict that every teen will engage in delinquency. Data from epidemiological studies using the self-report method suggest that almost all adolescents do commit some illegal acts (Elliott et al., 1983). In addition, even studies using official records of arrest by police find surprisingly high prevalence rates (for a review see Farrington, Ohlin, and Wilson, 1986). Nevertheless, some youths commit less delinquency than others, and a small minority abstains completely. Unfortunately, almost no research sheds light on the characteristics of teens who abstain from antisocial behavior altogether. Speculations are thus ill-informed by empirical observations. However, some predictions may be derived from the present theory of adolescence-limited delinquency. The predictions center on two theoretical prerequisites for adolescent-onset delinquency: the motivating maturity gap and antisocial role models. Some youths may skip the maturity gap because of late puberty or early initiation into adult roles. Others may find few opportunities for mimicking life-course-persistent delinquent models.

Some youths who refrain from antisocial behavior may, for some reason, not sense the maturity gap and therefore lack the hypothesized motivation for experimenting with crime. Perhaps such teens experience very late puberty so that the gap between biological and social adulthood is not signaled to them early in adolescence. For example, Caspi and Moffitt (1991) have shown that girls who do not menstruate by age 15 tend not to become involved in delinquency; in fact they evidence fewer than normal behavior problems as teens. Perhaps other abstainers belong to cultural or religious subgroups in which adolescents are given legitimate access to adult privileges and accountability. In his vivid ethnographic account of "old heads" and teenaged boys in a poor black neighborhood, Anderson (1990) described how mature community leaders drew certain boys into their own work and social lives, deliberately and publicly initiating the boys into manhood (and preventing delinquent involvement).

Some nondelinquent teens may lack structural opportunities for modeling antisocial peers. Adolescent crime rates are generally lower in rural areas than in inner-city areas (Skogan, 1979, 1990). Teens in urban areas are surrounded by a greater density of age peers (and have readier unsupervised access to them through public transportation and meeting venues such as parks and shopping malls) than are teens in relatively isolated rural areas. For instance, Sampson and Groves (1989) determined that the strongest community-level correlate of local rates of robbery and violence was the presence of "unsupervised groups of teenagers hanging out and making a nuisance" (p. 789). In that study, more traditional community correlates of crime, such as socioeconomic status, residential mobility, and ethnicity, were mediated by the teenaged social scene. School structures may also constrain or facilitate access to life-course-persistent models. Caspi et al. (1993) found that early puberty was associated with delinquency in girls but only if they had access to boys through attending coed high schools. Girls who were enrolled in girls' schools did not engage in delinquency. In that study, the difference in delinquent involvement between coed and single-sex school settings could not be explained by any personal or family characteristics that may have influenced how the girls came to be enrolled in their schools; access to delinquent role models was clearly the best explanation for the girls' behavior problems.

Youths may also be excluded from opportunities to mimic antisocial peers because of some personal characteristics that make them unattractive to other teens or that leave them reluctant to seek entry to newly popular delinquent groups. Shedler and Block (1990) found such an effect on the use of illegal drugs. They compared the personality styles of three adolescent groups: teens who abstained from trying any drug, teens who experimented with drugs, and teens who were frequent heavy drug users. Adolescents who experimented were the best adjusted teens in the sample. As expected, frequent users were troubled teens, who were alienated and antisocial. However, the abstainers were also problem teens: They were "relatively tense, overcontrolled, emotionally constricted … somewhat socially

isolated and lacking in interpersonal skills" (p. 618). This personality style was not a consequence of failing to try drugs. Rather, it was an enduring personality configuration. At age 7, these abstainers had been prospectively described by raters as "overcontrolled, timid, fearful and morose … they were not warm and responsive, not curious and open to new experience, not active, not vital, and not cheerful" (pp. 619–620). Similarly, Farrington and West (1990) reported that boys from criminogenic circumstances who did not become delinquent seemed nervous and withdrawn and had few or no friends. These provocative findings remind us that deviance is defined in relationship to its normative context. During adolescence, when delinquent behavior becomes the norm, nondelinquents warrant our scientific scrutiny.

In summary, this theory of adolescence-limited delinquency suggests that adolescents who commit no antisocial behavior at all have either (a) delayed puberty, (b) access to roles that are respected by adults, (c) environments that limit opportunities for learning about delinquency, (d) personal characteristics that exclude them from antisocial peer networks, or (e) all four. Research is needed to determine whether or not abstaining from delinquency is necessarily a sign of good adolescent adjustment….

Desistance from Crime: Adolescence-Limiteds Are Responsive to Shifting Reinforcement Contingencies

By definition, adolescence-limited delinquents generally do not maintain their delinquent behavior into adulthood. The account of life-course-persistent persons I made earlier in this article required an analysis of maintenance factors. In contrast, this account of adolescence-limited delinquents demands an analysis of desistance: Why do adolescence-limited delinquents desist from delinquency? This theory's answer: Healthy youths respond adaptively to changing contingencies. If motivational and learning mechanisms initiate and maintain their delinquency, then, likewise, changing contingencies can extinguish it….

With the inevitable progression of chronological age, more legitimate and tangible adult roles become available to teens. Adolescence-limited delinquents gradually experience a loss of motivation for delinquency as they exit the maturity gap. Moreover, when aging delinquents attain some of the privileges they coveted as teens, the consequences of illegal behavior shift from rewarding to punishing, *in their perception*. An adult arrest record will limit their job opportunities, drug abuse keeps them from getting to work on time, drunk driving is costly, and bar fights lead to accusations of unfit parenthood. Adolescence-limited delinquents have something to lose by persisting in their antisocial behavior beyond the teen years.

There is some evidence that many young adult offenders weigh the relative rewards from illegal and conventional activities when they contemplate future offending. In a study of three samples, the effect of age on criminal participation was mediated by young men's expectations about whether illegal earnings would exceed earnings from a straight job (Piliavin, Thornton, Gartner, and Matsueda, 1986). Important for this theory, research shows that "commitment costs" are among the factors weighed by young adults when they decide to discontinue offending. In the criminological subfield of perceptual deterrence research, commitment costs are defined as a person's judgment that past accomplishments will be jeopardized or that future goals will be foreclosed (Williams and Hawkins, 1986). Criminal behavior incurs commitment costs if it risks informal sanctions (disapproval by family, community, or employer) as well as formal sanctions (arrest or conviction penalty). Given that very few delinquent acts culminate in formal sanctions, perceptual deterrence theories consider informal sanctions as keys to deterrence. Paternoster and colleagues have tested the proposed effects of commitment costs and informal sanctions in a follow-up study of 300 young adults. They found that criminal offending 1 year later was best predicted by prospective indexes of

commitment costs (r = −.23) and informal sanctions (r = −.40). Those variables outdid gender, perceived risk of arrest, grade point average, and peer attachment (Paternoster, Saltzman, Waldo, and Chiricos, 1983).

Options for change. Consistent with this motivational analysis, the antisocial behavior of many delinquent teens has been found to decline after they leave high school (Elliott and Voss, 1974), join the army (Eider, 1986; Mattick, 1960), marry a prosocial spouse (Sampson and Laub, 1990), move away from the old neighborhood (West, 1982), or get a full-time job (Sampson and Laub, 1990). As these citations show, links between the assumption of adult roles and criminal desistance have been observed before. The issue left unaddressed by theory is why are some delinquents able to desist when others are not? What enables adolescence-limited delinquents to make these (often abrupt) transitions away from crime? Why do adolescence-limited delinquents come to realize that they have something to lose, whereas life-course-persistent delinquents remain undeterred? Here, two positions are advanced: Unlike their life-course-persistent counterparts, adolescence-limited delinquents are relatively exempt from the forces of (a) cumulative and (b) contemporary continuity.

First, without a lifelong history of antisocial behavior, the forces of cumulative continuity have had fewer years in which to gather the momentum of a downhill snowball. Before taking up delinquency, adolescence-limited offenders had ample years to develop an accomplished repertoire of prosocial behaviors and basic academic skills. These social skills and academic achievements make them eligible for postsecondary education, good marriages, and desirable jobs.

The availability of alternatives to crime may explain why some adolescence-limited delinquents desist later than others. (As shown in Figure 43.1, the desistance portion of the age-crime curve slopes more gradually than the abrupt criminal initiation portion.) Although the forces of cumulative continuity build up less momentum over the course of their relatively short crime careers, many adolescence-limited youths will fall prey to many of the same snares that maintain continuity among life-course-persistent persons. Those whose teen forays into delinquency inadvertently attracted damaging consequences may have more difficulty desisting. A drug habit, an incarceration, interrupted education, or a teen pregnancy are snares that require extra effort and time from which to escape. Thus, this theory predicts that variability in age at desistance from crime should be accounted for by the cumulative number and type of ensnaring life events that entangle persons in a deviant life-style.

Second, in stark contrast with the earlier account of life-course-persistent offenders, personality disorder and cognitive deficits play no part in the delinquency of adolescence-limited offenders. As a result, they are exempt from the sources of contemporary continuity that plague their life-course-persistent counterparts. In general, these young adults have adequate social skills, they have a record of average or better academic achievement, their mental health is sturdy, they still possess the capacity to forge close attachment relationships, and then, retain the good intelligence they had when they entered adolescence. One study of girls who grew up in institutional care has illustrated that individual differences influence which adolescents are able to attain prosocial outcomes in young adulthood (Quinton and Rutter, 1988). In that study, some girls reared in institutions were able to escape adversity for advantage through marriage to a supportive husband, but a constellation of individual psychological attributes determined which girls were able to marry well.

At the crossroads of young adulthood, adolescence-limited and life-course-persistent delinquents go different ways. This happens because the developmental histories and personal traits of adolescence-limiteds allow them the option of exploring new life pathways. The histories and traits of life-course-persistents have foreclosed their options, entrenching them in the antisocial path. To test this hypothesis, research must examine conditional effects of individual histories on opportunities for desistance from crime.…

NOTE

1. Between 9% and 22% of males not arrested as juveniles are arrested as adults, suggesting that adult-onset offenders constitute between 5% and 15% of all males (for a review see Farrington, Ohlin, and Wilson, 1986). However, estimates that are based on such official data are too high because most offenders engage in crime for some time before they are first arrested. Longitudinal studies of self-report delinquency show that only 1% to 4% of males commit their first criminal offense after age 17 (Elliott, Huizinga, and Menard, 1989). Adult-onset crime is not only very unusual, but it tends to be low rate, nonviolent (Blumstein and Cohen, 1987), and generally not accompanied by the many complications that attend a persistent and pervasive antisocial lifestyle (Farrington, Loeber, Elliott, et al., 1990).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe the different ways in which individual traits and environmental factors interact with (or influence) one another to produce persistent antisocial behavior.
2. What types of individual traits foster antisocial behavior, according to Moffitt? *Why* do these traits increase the likelihood of antisocial behavior?
3. Describe Moffitt's theory of adolescence-limited antisocial behavior. Why is it that individuals in the "adolescence-limited" group are able to desist from crime in early adulthood while individuals in the "life-course-persistent" group are not?
4. Why does Moffitt state that adolescence-limited antisocial behavior is *not pathological* while life-course-persistent antisocial behavior is *pathological*?

44.

A Theory of Persistent Offending and Desistance from Crime*

John H. Laub

Robert J. Sampson

Consider a male college student who has an unhealthy lifestyle. He smokes, binge drinks with friends several nights a week, stays out late in bars whenever possible, never exercises, and "blows off" classes regularly. On campus one day, he meets a female student who is attractive, humorous, and seems to understand him. They start to date and "hang out" together.

Although his new girlfriend likes to "party" once in a while, she is also serious about school and urges him to take classes with her. Being with her during weekdays also means going with her to the library most evenings. Avid about fitness, she brings him to the health club on campus and encourages him to start a running program. As time passes, his days are filled with a new routine: going to classes, going to the library, going to the health club, going to dinner with his girlfriend. He starts to lose touch with his former drinking buddies. Her friends, in fact, become his friends. He sometimes misses the old days of partying and promiscuity, but his new life has special rewards that he would be foolish to squander through some irresponsible conduct. He is, as they say, a "changed man."

This fictitious scenario is a way of understanding how, according to Laub and Sampson (2003), persistent offenders come to change their life course and desist from crime (see also Laub et al., 2006; Sampson and Laub, 2005). There are four features to this change process. First, the offender experiences a structural turning point. This might be a new relationship (or marriage), a good job, or perhaps military service. Second, as a result of this turning point, the offender is subjected to increased informal social control; he or she is monitored and sanctioned for deviant conduct. These relationships also offer support, which can lessen crime directly and indirectly by increasing the bond of attachment. Third, the routine activities of the offender are transformed from unstructured and oriented toward deviant locations (e.g., bars) to being structured and filled with prosocial responsibilities. In effect, the offender is cut off from deviant influences, especially antisocial peers. Fourth, almost "by default" there is a commitment to a new life. So much is invested in the new relationships and lifestyle that sacrificing everything for a criminal adventure would be too costly. To use Hirschi's (Chapter 16) terms, the bond of commitment has grown strong and insulates against further offending.

Laub and Sampson, however, do not see this process of change and desistance as inevitable. Along the way, offenders—as with our college student described above—exercise human agency. There is a subjective dimension to our lives. We are affected by our circumstances, including newly formed intimate relationships, enjoyable jobs, and a call to serve our country. But we also are willful creatures and thus make choices—exercise "agency"—within these circumstances. That is, choices are "situated," but they are choices nonetheless.

Our college student might have decided to "blow off" a date with his new girlfriend—thus ending their relationship—in favor of a night of drinking with his friends. He might have decided that his increasingly conventional lifestyle

was too boring. And he might have defined his girlfriend's monitoring as incessant nagging and defiantly told her to mind her own business. In short, structural turning points might provide the opportunity to enter the change process, but they do not enforce conformity in some deterministic way. In the end, wayward college students—and offenders—play an active role in making their futures.

This view has large implications for life-course theories. In particular, it suggests that, at least in adulthood, there is no clearly predictable developmental sequence as theorists such as Moffitt (1993[Chapter 43]) would propose. Offenders do not belong to groups in which everyone's life in crime unfolds in the same way. Rather, Laub and Sampson assert that both persistence (or continuity) and change are affected by fortuitous events (e.g., meeting the right marital partner, getting a good job) and by human agency—the will people exercise and the choices they make.

Note that fortuitous events and human agency are, by their nature, rather unpredictable. They can happen by chance or arise because situations change. This means that an offender's destiny is not determined in childhood or adolescence. What occurs in adulthood also matters. Life does not simply unfold but rather is constructed as situations and offenders' reactions to them emerge at unexpected times and in indeterminate ways.

References

Laub, John H. and Robert J. Sampson. 2003. *Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives: Delinquent Boys to Age 70*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Laub, John H., Robert J. Sampson, and Gary Sweeten. 2006. "Assessing Sampson and Laub's Life-Course Theory of Crime." In Francis T. Cullen, John Paul Wright, and Kristie R. Blevins (eds.), *Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory—Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **15**, pp. 313–333. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Moffitt, Terrie E. 1993. "Adolescence-Limited and Life-Course-Persistent Antisocial Behavior: A Developmental Taxonomy." *Psychological Review* **100**: 674–701.

Sampson, Robert J. and John H. Laub. 2005. "A Life-Course View of the Development of Crime." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* **602**: 12–45.

We seek a theory of social control that will identify sources of persistence in and desistance from crime. What sustains persistent offending? What keeps some offenders from moving to more conventional pathways? In a similar vein, how do offenders go straight? How do offenders shift from crime and deviance to more conventional pathways? How do ex-offenders maintain conformity to the law? The central question we seek to answer is: what are the mechanisms underlying the processes of persistent offending and desistance from crime?

One of our theoretical goals is to expand the understanding of informal and formal social control across the life course. In the follow-up, we focused our attention on work, family, the military, community organizations, and neighborhood hangouts (for example, taverns) as well as on formal social control institutions like the police, prison, and parole. Thus we propose to examine a wide array of institutions that we believe influence both formal and informal social control. At the same time, we explicitly recognize that these institutions are embedded in a specific local culture (place) as well as a specific historical context (time)….

We also believe that human agency (or personal choice) and situational context, especially routine activities, are vitally important for understanding patterns of stability and change in criminal behavior over the life course. Individuals make choices and are active participants in the construction of their lives. For example, … calculated and articulated resistance to authority is a recurrent theme in the lives of persistent offenders. At times crime is attractive because it is exciting and seductive (see Katz 1988). In crucial ways, then, crime is more than a weakening of social

bonds—human agency must be recognized as an important element of understanding crime and deviance over the life course.

Situational contingencies and routine activities may also lure individuals toward or away from crime, and these contingencies and activities need to be systematically incorporated into our understanding of criminal trajectories over the life course. For example, we found persistent offenders to have rather chaotic and unstructured lives across multiple dimensions (such as living arrangements, work, and family). Routine activities for these men were loaded with opportunities for crime and extensive associations with like-minded offenders. Thus situational variation, especially in lifestyle activities, needs to be taken into account when explaining continuity and change in criminal behavior over the life course….

Reprinted by permission of the publisher from *Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives: Delinquent Boys to Age 70* by John H. Laub and Robert J. Sampson, pp. 37–39, 278–282, 285–286, 292–293, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Copyright © 2003 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

Desistance by Default

The process of desistance is complex and occurs for all types of offenders (for example, serious and nonserious, violent and nonviolent) at different ages over the life course. Although there are multiple pathways to desistance, our data indicate that desistance is facilitated by self-described "turning points"—changes in situational and structural life circumstances like a good marriage or a stable job—in combination with individual actions (that is, personal agency). Although age is clearly important in understanding desistance, a focus on age and age alone obfuscates understanding the life course of crime. From our perspective, desistance is best viewed as a process realized over time, not a single event.

Our stance on the desistance process contrasts with emerging theories of desistance that emphasize cognitive transformations or identity shifts as necessary for desistance to occur (see Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph 2002; Maruna 2001). We believe that most offenders desist in response to structural turning points that serve as the catalyst for long-term behavioral change. The image of "desistance by default" best fits the desistance process we found in our data. Desistance for our subjects was not necessarily a conscious or deliberate process, but rather the consequence of what Howard Becker calls "side bets" (1960, 38). Many men made a commitment to go straight without even realizing it. Before they knew it, they had invested so much in a marriage or a job that they did not want to risk losing their investment (H. Becker 1960, 1964; see also Matsueda and Heimer 1997, 171). In other words, "habits provide an anchor by strengthening the forces making for persistence in behavior" (G. Becker and Murphy 2000, 152). We agree that the offenders' own perspectives and words need to be brought into the understanding of desistance, and we believe we have done so. However, offenders can and do desist without a conscious decision to "make good" (compare Maruna 2001), and offenders can and do desist without a "cognitive transformation" (compare Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph 2002).

Some of the men we studied, of course, did want to make good, and they in fact desisted from crime. Consider, for example, Richard and his wife, who have taken in foster children who were wards of the state for many years. Our main point is that many of the desisters did not seek to make good—they simply desisted with little if any cognitive reflection on the matter. "Redemption scripts" (Maruna 2001) were also noticeably absent in most of the life-history narratives. The majority of men we interviewed desisted from crime largely because they were able to capitalize on key structural and situational circumstances. They often selected these structural and situational circumstances (for example, they decided to get married, get that job, hang out with those friends), but these institutions and relationships in turn influenced the men as well (see also G. Becker and Murphy 2000). Thus the developmental phase of cognitive transformation or making good is not a necessary pathway to desistance.

(De)Connectivity and Marginality

Men who desisted from crime were embedded in structured routines, socially bonded to wives, children, and significant others, drew on resources and social support from their relationships, and were virtually and directly supervised and monitored. In other words, structures, situations, and persons offered nurturing and informal social control that facilitated the process of desistance from crime. Even the most hardened offender is not a persistent offender in the true sense of the term and, as we have observed in our long-term follow-up study, virtually all offenders eventually desist albeit at different rates and ages.

The key question is, What is it about "persistent" offenders that distinguishes them from other offenders? In our view, more than being identified by a single trait like poor verbal intelligence or low self-control or even a series of static traits, the persistent offender, to the extent the term has meaning, seems devoid of linking structures at each phase of the life course, especially involving relationships that can provide nurturing, social support, and informal social control. Generally, the persistent offenders we interviewed experienced residential instability, marital instability, job instability, failure in school and the military, and relatively long periods of incarceration. Except when in prison or jail, they were "social nomads," to use Foucault's term (1995 [1975]). In contrast to the men who desisted from crime, the life of the persistent offender was marked by marginality and a lack of structure that led to even more situations conducive to crime. For those without permanent addresses, steady jobs, spouses, children, and other rooted forms of life, crime and deviance is an unsurprising result—even for those possessing so-called prosocial traits. As a consequence of chaotic and unstructured routines, one has increased contact with those individuals who are similarly situated—in this case, similarly unattached and free from nurturing, social capital or support, and informal social control. Thus while group offending may well decline with age (Warr 2002, 130), we find in our narrative data that the influence of deviant peers and criminal networks is particularly salient in the lives of persistent offenders.

Will: The Power of Human Agency

For a number of our formerly delinquent men, personal agency looms large in the processes of persistence and desistance from crime. Our narratives showed that some men who persisted in crime consciously chose to continue involvement in crime and did not apologize or make excuses for their criminal behavior (see also Katz 1988). Many men who desisted from crime similarly displayed a variety of voluntaristic actions that facilitated the process of desistance. In our life-history narratives, one thus sees strong evidence for both will/human agency and "commitment by default" (H. Becker 1960), often in the same man's life. In other words, there is no escaping the tension surrounding conscious action and unconscious action generated by default....

In our view, both objective and subjective factors are implicated in the processes by which some offenders commit crime at a higher rate and for a longer period of time than other offenders (see also Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph 2002; Maruna 2001; Shover 1996). The linked ideas of "contingencies" and "intercontingencies" are useful in this discussion (see H. Becker 1998, 28–35). Events and their resulting actions are contingent upon other events and their accompanying actions. Intercontingencies are events and actions that are dependent upon events and actions by other people. Thus a quality marriage may be a turning point for some men because of the event itself, their subjective state, and the behavior of others around them as well as the subsequent events that result because of the fact that they are now married.

Perhaps the concept that best captures this theoretical idea is "situated choice." Our interest is the interaction between life-course transitions, macro-level events, situational context, and individual will. Moreover, we recognize that both the social environment and the individual are influenced by the interaction of structure and choice. This view of individual choice extends well beyond selection effects—structures are determined by individual choices, and in turn structures constrain, modify, and limit individual choices. In other words, choices are always embedded in social structures. Following Gary Becker and Kevin Murphy (2000), we believe that the interaction of choice and structure produces behavior that cannot be predicted from a focus on one or the other. From our perspective, it is particularly important to reconcile the idea of choice or will with a structuralist notion of turning points (Abbott 1997, 96–97). Indeed, as Abbott has written, "A major turning point has the potential to open a system the way a key has the potential to open a lock ... action is necessary to complete the turning" (1997, 102). In this instance, action is both thought and behavior, and thus individual action needs to align with the social structure in order to produce behavioral change and to maintain change (or stability?) over the life course. As noted above, this process of change reflects the continuous interplay between purposeful action and default "side bets" (H. Becker 1960) that accumulate over time....

Implications for Developmental Criminology

If one defines development as life-history change, then developmental criminology should focus on changes in the development of crime and antisocial behavior over time. Relying on what Michael Tonry and David Farrington (1995) refer to as the central insight from Shakespeare—that the child is father to the man (see Caspi 2000)—researchers have addressed how developmental processes are linked to the onset, continuation, and cessation of criminal and antisocial behavior. Much has been learned and developmental criminology is now ascendant. One of the most popular and compelling theories of crime in the developmental camp is Terrie Moffitt's dual taxonomy theory of offending.

In our view, the character of "development" in developmental criminology is a key theoretical issue. Lewontin has stated that "the term *development* is a metaphor that carries with it a prior commitment to the nature of the process" (2000, 5). Using the analogy of a photographic image, Lewontin argues that the way the term "development" is used is a process that makes the latent image apparent. This seems to be what developmental criminological theory is all about. For example, in Moffitt's theory of crime, the environment offers a "set of enabling conditions" that allow individual traits to express themselves. Although reciprocal interactions with the environment are allowed, life-course-persistent offenders and adolescence-limited offenders follow a preprogrammed line of development—an unwinding, an unfolding, or an unrolling of what is fundamentally "already there." The view of development as a predetermined unfolding is linked to a typological understanding of the world—different internal programs will have different outcomes for individuals of a different type. Lewontin writes, "If the development of an individual is the unfolding of a genetic program immanent in the fertilized egg, then variations in the outcome of development must be consequences of variations in that program" (2000, 17).

Debates about development in the social sciences are not new (see, for example, the exchange between Dannefer [1984] and Baltes and Nesselroade [1984]). As noted, some developmentalists recognize social interactions, but in the end they embrace a between-individual focus that emphasizes the primacy of early childhood attributes that are presumed to be stable. We view the life course as something altogether different. Furthermore, we see development as it is typically defined and emphasized in the literature as not necessarily pertinent to the study of situated human behavior. In our theory of crime, development is better conceived as the constant interaction between individuals and their environment, coupled with the factor of chance or "random developmental noise" (Lewontin 2000, 35–36). Recognizing developmental noise implies that "the organism is determined neither by its genes nor by its environment nor even by interaction between them, but bears a significant mark of random processes" (2000, 38).

From this view it makes sense that we uncovered enormous heterogeneity in criminal offending over the life course. Some offenders start early and stop; others start early and continue for long periods of time. A sizable portion of the offending population displays a zigzag pattern of offending over long time periods. Most important, long-term patterns of offending cannot be explained by individual differences (for example, low verbal IQ), childhood characteristics (for example, early onset of misbehavior), or adolescent characteristics (for example, chronic juvenile offending). In our conception of development, then, the sum of the parts includes individual differences, environmental differences, social interactions, and random, chance events. All of this leads to considerable "noisy, unpredictable development." Coupled with the analyses presented throughout this book, this description captures well the life-course reality of much crime....

Conclusion

Whereas in *Crime in the Making* we saw informal social control as the primary explanation of crime and desistance over the life course, here we offer a more nuanced perspective. As David Matza said almost forty years ago, the missing element in traditional social control theory is human agency (1964, 183); motivation has always been its weakest link. Moreover, as we argued in the past, traditional social control theory suffers from other problems: it is narrowly portrayed as a static, cross-sectional theory that ignores the dynamic, longitudinal aspects of informal social control and support; the theory neglects the role of social structure in the social bonding process; and the theory fails to appreciate the feedback effects of crime and incarceration on social bonds as an important part of the causal story. And though beyond the scope of this book, traditional social control cannot easily explain (or possibly even comprehend) crime that results when individuals are socially bonded and tightly connected to strong subcultures or higher-echelon segments of society. Events such as the Enron and WorldCom scandals, alleged insider trading by Martha Stewart, terrorism here and abroad, and sex abuse by priests in the Catholic Church should cause even the most ardent supporter of traditional social control theory some discomfort and consternation.

Although we do not abandon control theory, we see other concepts as equally relevant for understanding persistent offending and desistance from crime over the life course. [T]hese concepts include personal agency and situated choice, routine activities, aging, macro-level historical events, and local culture and community context. We have thereby offered an expanded vision of our age-graded theory of informal social control presented in *Crime in the Making* and our other writings over the last decade.... Integrative and emergent findings pushed us to expand our theory of informal social control to include, among others, the idea of situated choice as central to an understanding of crime from childhood through old age. As the Glueck men near the end of their lives, the complexities and possibilities of such choices become ever more apparent and, inevitably, ever more consequential.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe the process by which persistent offenders desist from crime. What is "desistance by default"?
2. Why would Laub and Sampson argue that most criminological theories are overly deterministic? How does their construct of "human agency" try to fix this deficiency?
3. Why would Laub and Sampson reject the idea that crime is a development process that unfolds across the entire life course? Would they support or oppose Moffitt's theory?
4. Based on their theory of self-control, how might Gottfredson and Hirschi criticize Laub and Sampson's perspective and, in particular, their view of human agency?

45.
The Feared Self: An Identity Theory of Desistance*

Raymond Paternoster

Shawn Bushway

A central issue in life-course criminology is not only why individuals get into crime but also why they get out of it. As we have seen, Moffitt (1993, Chapter 43) proposes that desistance is part of a development pathway, whereas Laub and Sampson (2003, Chapter 44) portray desistance as an event that could occur at any time, depending on whether a good romantic relationship or job is obtained or a moment of human agency to leave crime emerges. An alternative approach is found in identity theories of desistance. As may be recalled from Chapter 20, Maruna (2001) suggests that career criminals stop offending when they adopt a redemption as opposed to a condemnation script. In this case, offenders are able to "make good" with their lives when, in their narrative identity, they define their real self as good, are optimistic about the possibility of change, and see their future as having a higher purpose.

Paternoster and Bushway's (2009) identity theory falls within this alternative approach. According to their perspective, all people have two selves—a "working self" and a "possible self." A working self refers to a person's current identity and is based on current experiences. The possible self is a person's sense of who he or she will be in the future. This projected self or identity may be positive (e.g., a success making lots of money) or negative (e.g., unemployed and poor). A negative future identity is something to be worried about, which is why Paternoster and Bushway refer to it as the "feared self." As they note, a "feared possible self" can be "a powerful motivator for change" (2009: 1116).

For offenders, the primary component of their working self is being a "criminal." One problem, however, is that a career in crime can become unsatisfying—due, for example, to lengthy stays in prison, the risk of violent victimization from other criminals, and the low financial payoffs from most offenses. When these dissatisfactions link together, offenders experience what Paternoster and Bushway (2009: 1121) call the "crystallization of discontent." At this point, offenders become fed up with the costs of crime and essentially make the rational choice to desist. "Criminal offenders," the authors observe, "act with agency" (p. 1121).

Offenders' feared self increases their motivation to relinquish their working selves as criminals. Looking into the future, offenders may not like what they see. They are afraid that they will be imprisoned or homeless, jobless and in dire economic straits, and devoid of any meaningful relationships. Trying to avoid this feared self can provide a strong incentive to change. They also may be prompted to imagine a more positive possible self—"a working person, a good spouse, a giving father, a law abider" (Paternoster and Bushway, 2009: 1120). At this juncture, a gradual process can ensue where the working self of a criminal is replaced with a conventional identity. When this identity change occurs, desistance is possible.

Finally, desistance from crime becomes most likely when this new identity directs offenders to change their life preferences, such as replacing a taste for partying and fast money with a taste for being at home and getting by

with honest money. The presence of conventional social support—whether from family, friends, or counselors—also is consequential. In such cases, however, participation in conventional networks is due in large part to offenders selecting into them and, in so doing, giving up antisocial associates. Human agency—the choice to be conventional —matters.

When combined with the work of Maruna and others, Paternoster and Bushway's identity theory enriches our understanding of the role of cognition in crime. For many criminological theories, what goes on inside the heads of offenders is largely ignored. Whether it is social disorganization or genes, these perspectives focus on factors, independent of people's thinking and human agency, that place them at risk for crime. By contrast, identity theorists remind us that offenders are not automatons driven thoughtlessly into and out of crime. Rather, like the rest of us, offenders have a sense of who they are, and this identity shapes the choices they make. The next step in this significant line of research is conducting more extensive empirical investigations that can unpack which cognitions—perhaps a feared self or perhaps a redemption script—matter the most and when this is so (see also Hallett et al., 2017; Paternoster and Bushway, 2011; Rocque et al., 2016).

References

Hallett, Michael, Joshua Hays, Byron Johnson, Sung Joon Jang, and Grant Duwe. 2017. *The Angola Prison Seminary: Effects of Faith-Based Ministry on Identity Transformation, Desistance, and Rehabilitation*. New York: Routledge.

Laub, John H. and Robert J. Sampson. 2003. *Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives: Delinquent Boys to Age 70*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Maruna, Shadd. 2001. *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Moffitt, Terrie E. 1993. "Adolescence-Limited and Life-Course-Persistent Antisocial Behavior: A Developmental Taxonomy." *Psychological Review* **100**: 674–701.

Paternoster, Ray and Shawn Bushway. 2009. "Desistance and the Feared Self: Toward an Identity Theory of Criminal Desistance." *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* **99**: 1103–1156.

____. 2011. "Studying Desistance from Crime: Where Quantitative Meets Qualitative Methods." In Mary Bosworth and Carolyn Hoyle (eds.), *What Is Criminology?*, pp. 183–197. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Rocque, Michael, Chad Posick, and Ray Paternoster. 2016. "Identities Through Time: An Exploration of Identity Change as a Cause of Desistance." *Justice Quarterly* **33**: 45–72.

We present an identity theory of desistance that builds upon and complements the work of these other theories by integrating a diverse body of literature in social psychology, behavioral economics, and collective movements in sociology. We draw upon a distinction between, on the one hand, one's current or working identity and, on the other, the kind of person that one wishes to be—and, more importantly, not be—in the future: one's *possible self*. Offenders have working identities as persons who, among other things, have and will commit criminal acts. This working identity remains a locus of commitment as long as it is thought to be successful or, more specifically, as long as, on average, it nets more benefits than costs. Gradually, however, the working identity of "criminal offender" becomes less and less satisfying. The process is a measured one and only occurs when perceived failures and dissatisfactions within different domains of life become connected and when current failures become linked with anticipated future failures. These failures include a sense that being an offender is no longer financially beneficial, that it is too dangerous, that the perceived costs of imprisonment loom more likely and greater, and that the costs to one's social relationships are too dear.

When these life dissatisfactions become linked to one's criminal identity, they are more likely to be projected into the future, and the person begins to think of his or her "self" as one who would like to change to be something else. This perceived sense of a future or possible self as a non-offender coupled with the fear that without change one faces a bleak and highly undesirable future provides the initial motivation to break from crime. Movement toward the institutions that support and maintain desistance (legitimate employment or association with conventional others, for example) is unlikely to take place until the possible self as non-offender is contemplated and at least initially acted upon. Human agency, we believe, is expressed through this act of intentional self-change. Further, this change in identity brings with it a change in one's preferences (for crime, drugs, "wild" peers) and one's orientation to the future, such that causal factors have a different impact on the person now than in the past. In understanding desistance as literally a "break with the past," something changes about the person, such as his or her identity and preferences, so that the causal processes moving behavior are different across the different time periods….

In the theory developed here, intentional self-change is understood to be more cognitive, internal, and individual, at least initially, with new social networks approached and mobilized subsequent to the emergence of the new, conventional identity. While we think that the kinds of conventional social relationships and role-taking described by Giordano et al. are important and necessary parts of the desistance process, we think that these are not accessed until after offenders *first decide to change* and then actually begin to change their sense of who they are. In addition, we place greater emphasis on the notion of the "feared self"—an image of what the person *does not want to become* as an initial source of motivation for intentional self-change among those with a "spoiled identity." …

Our theory of desistance casts the decision to quit crime as just that—a decision by an offender that she has "had enough" of crime and being a criminal and desires a change in what she does and who she is. In our view, desistance comes about as a result of the offender *willfully* changing his identity and both working toward something positive in the future and steering away from something feared….

Reprinted from Ray Paternoster and Shawn Bushway. 2009. "Desistance and the Feared Self: Toward an Identity Theory of Criminal Desistance." *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 99: 1103–1156.

The Working Self and the Possible Self

The working self is that component of the self that can be accessed at the moment and is based upon the individual's here-and-now experience. Anchored in the present from one's existing pool of experiences and self-knowledge, the working self consists of what the self is in the present. This notion of the working self does not mean that identity is fleeting or inconsistent over time and place even in the present because there can be more central or core aspects of one's self that are "chronically accessible." One can, for instance, have, as part of his working self, the notion that he is a drug dealer, a father concerned about his child, a drug user, a person with limited education and legitimate job possibilities, an indifferent but demanding lover, one with an expensive taste in liquor, and a loyal crime partner. Not all of these components of self-knowledge will be accessed or relevant at all times, but, relatively speaking, others will be more core components of one's self, or part of one's self-schema.

In addition to a sense of who and what one is at the moment (a self that is fixed on the present), an individual also has a sense of self that is directed toward the future. This future-oriented self can be defined positively as the self one would like to become or negatively as the self one would not want to become or fear that one might become. Hazel Markus and Paula Nurius have defined both dimensions of this future orientation of the self as a *possible self*....

I may, for example, see myself currently (my working self) as an unskilled thief who is addicted to drugs, but may see myself in the future as working in a job (though perhaps for minimum wage), being a better parent and partner, owning a car, and ceasing my life of drug use and crime. I may, however, also fear that I may turn out to be a burned-out addict, riddled with disease, homeless, childless, jobless, and destined to die alone in prison....

A feared possible self can also be a powerful motivator for change and an outcome that one can intentionally try to avoid.... The role of a feared self can be seen in the words of a recovering heroin addict and street criminal in Biernacki's study who recounted the fear of becoming a prostitute as a factor in quitting drugs: "I was real scared, real frightened, real terrified ... of what would happen to me. I felt like I was at a point where either I had to clean up or become a dealer or prostitute." ...

Though stable, identities clearly can and do change. We are arguing that a working identity as a criminal offender can change into a more conventional identity when the person thinks of a conventional identity as a positive possible self and an identity of a burned out ex-con with no friends or possessions as a negative possible self. Contemplation of a possible self that does not include criminal offending in turn occurs when the working identity of criminal is perceived to be problematic or disappointing....

As one begins to find less success and satisfaction with the criminal identity, one is likely to conjure up negative possible selves: long terms in prison with young, violence-prone fellow inmates; the possibility of a violent death; or small payoffs from criminal enterprises. These negative possible selves and the eventual activation of positive selves —a working person, a good spouse, a giving father, a law abider—can provide both the motivation and direction for change. Before one is willing to give up his working identity as a lawbreaker, one must begin to perceive this identity as unsatisfying, thus weakening one's commitment to it....

The Crystallization of Discontent

What would motivate a past and current criminal offender to begin to think of an identity and life without crime? It seems likely that current offenders would only begin to think of a possible self that is conventional and crime-free when they realize that the costs of crime and a criminal identity are beginning to become too great and that being conventional might provide either greater satisfaction or at least a lower price. This view is faithful both to our view that criminal behavior and its abandonment are rational behaviors and our belief that, though constrained by sometimes severe structural factors, criminal offenders act with agency….

This dissatisfaction with crime is more likely to lead to a conventional possible self when failures or dissatisfactions across many aspects of one's life are *linked together* and attributed to the criminal identity itself. It is not just that one has experienced failures but that diverse kinds of failures in one's life become interconnected as part of a coherent whole. This coherence leads the person to feel a more general kind of life dissatisfaction, the kind of life dissatisfaction that can lead to identity change, or what K. Jill Kiecolt has rightly termed "intentional self-change." Roy Baumeister has referred to the linking of previously isolated dissatisfactions and senses of failure in life as the "crystallization of discontent."

Supports for Self-Change

The relationship to the process of criminal desistance is clear. Offenders seeking to break from crime, a different type of “high-risk” activism, slowly begin to “play at” a new identity and make initial and safe forays into a more prosocial life. They develop new, non-criminal preferences and slowly begin to realign their social networks to include more conventional people. These more conventional people are important sources of social capital who provide support for their new identities, a normative climate that supports prosocial conduct and information about jobs, treatment programs, housing, and the availability of financial assistance. Those wishing to quit crime are more likely to be successful at desistance if they are embedded in social networks that not only support their new identities and tastes but also isolate them from those who would oppose them quitting crime or induce them to continue in their criminal ways.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are a "working self" and a "possible self"? How would these concepts apply to you?
2. What is a "feared self"? How might this possible identity provide motivation for an offender to change and desist from crime?
3. Shadd Maruna (Chapter 20) has argued that the narrative identity of a "redemption script" leads to desistance. How does his identity theory differ from the "feared self" identity theory of Paternoster and Bushway?
4. Terrie Moffitt (Chapter 43) and John Laub and Robert Sampson (Chapter 44) also have theories of desistance. How do identity theories differ from these perspectives? Might they be combined in some way?

SECTION 5

CONTEMPORARY CRIMINOLOGY

Francis T. Cullen
University of Cincinnati

Robert Agnew
Emory University

Pamela Wilcox
Pennsylvania State University

PART XIV

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER: INTEGRATED THEORIES OF CRIME

Francis T. Cullen
University of Cincinnati

Robert Agnew
Emory University

Pamela Wilcox
Pennsylvania State University

We have examined several major theories of crime up to this point, including biological, psychological, and sociological theories. Included in our examination were the three major theories in contemporary criminology: learning, strain, and control theories. Certain versions of these theories are at the micro or individual level; that is, they focus on explaining why some individuals are more likely than others to engage in crime. Other versions are at the macro level, focusing on why some areas or groups have higher crime rates than others. For example, social disorganization theory states that some communities have higher crime rates because they are lower in control (e.g., community residents are less likely to sanction offenders). We typically concluded our review of each theory by stating that it had some empirical support. In particular, certain of the variables identified by the theory are able to explain some of the variation in crime. Given this conclusion, it is natural to ask about the possibility of integrating these theories so that we might explain more of the variation in crime. It is to this topic that we now turn: integrated theories of crime.

Doing Theoretical Integration

Messner et al. state that "to integrate theories is to formulate relationships among them" (1989: 1). Integrated theories, then, do more than simply list the causes of crime from different theories. They attempt to describe the relationships between these causes. Several strategies for integration have been described (Akers and Sellers, 2008; Barak, 1998, 2010; Bernard and Snipes, 1996; Einstadter and Henry, 2006; Farrington, 2005; Hirschi, 1979; Krohn and Ward, 2016; Messner et al., 1989; Miethe and Meier, 1994; Robinson and Beaver, 2009; Tittle, 1995; Turner and Blevins, 2009). The most common is to list the key causes or variables from different theories and describe how they affect one another and work together to affect crime.

Efforts to integrate theories actually have a long history in criminology, and several integrated theories have already been presented in this text. Cohen's theory (Chapter 12), for example, is a deliberate effort to integrate strain and

differential association/subcultural deviance theories. Cohen uses strain theory to help explain the origin of criminal subcultures. He argues that working-class boys sometimes respond to their inability to achieve middle-class status by setting up an alternative status system in which they can successfully compete. This alternative system is said to value those things that the middle class condemns, such as being a good fighter and thief. Cohen then argues that this criminal subculture directly increases the likelihood of crime and influences the impact of strain on crime. Strained individuals are more likely to engage in crime if they are part of this subculture (see Cloward and Ohlin, 1960, for a similar argument).

Rosenfeld and Messner's institutional-anomie theory (Chapter 13) is another example of an integrated theory, one at the macro level. They integrate Merton's macro-level emphasis on the cultural system (the cultural system emphasizes the unrestrained pursuit of money by everyone) with structural arguments that are compatible with social disorganization theory (the dominance of the economy weakens the ability of other institutions to effectively socialize people and sanction deviance). There have also been some attempts to integrate macro-level and micro-level theories (see Akers, 2009; Messner, 2012; Messner et al., 1989). Theorists describe the ways in which macro-level variables ultimately influence the criminal behavior of individuals. In doing so, they better describe how such variables affect crime rates, for crime rates are based on individual criminal behavior.

Most integrations involve sociological theories. But, as highlighted in Part XII, biosocial criminology integrates theories across disciplines, combining variables from biological, psychological, and sociological theories. These theories typically argue that the social environment and biological factors affect the development of individual traits conducive to crime, such as impulsivity and irritability. Such traits, in turn, influence the social environment (e.g., irritable individuals are more likely to provoke negative responses from others and sort themselves into negative environments, such as delinquent peer groups). Further, traits and the social environment interact in their effect on crime, such that crime is most likely when individuals with traits such as irritability and impulsivity are in environments conducive to crime. Moffitt's theory of life-course-persistent and adolescence-limited offending, reprinted in Chapter 43, is perhaps the leading biosocial theory of crime today (see also Brennan and Raine, 1997; Farrington, 2005; Lahey and Waldman, 2005; Rebellon et al., 2015; Robinson and Beaver, 2009).

Still other integrated theories have attracted much attention in criminology. Elliott and his colleagues (1979, 1985, 1989) integrated the three leading sociological theories of crime: strain, control, and differential association/social learning theories. They describe two major pathways to delinquency: (1) low social control increases the likelihood of association with delinquent peers, which increases the likelihood of delinquency; and (2) individuals high in social control experience strain, which reduces their level of control, which in turn increases their likelihood of association with delinquent peers and thereby delinquency (see also Taylor, 2010).

Thornberry's (1987) interactional theory of delinquency combines control and learning theories. The key variables in the theory include attachment to parents, commitment to school, and belief in conventional values (all from Hirschi's social control theory, described in Chapter 16). They also include association with delinquent peers and delinquent values, from differential association and social learning theories (Chapters 7 and 9). Most theorists simply argue that one variable, such as attachment to parents, causes another, such as school commitment. So juveniles who are weakly bonded to parents are more likely to perform poorly at school. Thornberry, however, argues that most variables have *reciprocal* effects on one another (e.g., attachment to parents affects school commitment and school commitment affects attachment to parents). Delinquency itself is involved in this pattern of reciprocal causation. For example, association with delinquent peers increases the likelihood of delinquency, and engaging in delinquency increases the likelihood that one will associate with delinquent peers. Further, Thornberry describes how the variables in his theory change over the life course. For example, the importance of attachment to parents diminishes as adolescents age, while new variables, such as commitment to work, become important. In addition, recent work

on interactional theory has incorporated biological and trait variables. And, like Moffitt's theory, interactional theory attempts to explain both life-course-persistent and adolescence-limited offending (see Kubrin et al., 2009; Thornberry, 1996; Thornberry and Krohn, 2005; Thornberry et al., 1998, 2003).

Agnew's (2005) general theory of crime and delinquency draws heavily on trait, strain, control, social learning, and labeling theories of crime. Agnew lists those key variables that have relatively large, direct effects on crime. Such variables are grouped into five clusters: (1) the personality traits of low constraint and negative emotionality, (2) poor parenting practices and no/bad marriages, (3) negative school experiences and limited education, (4) peer delinquency, and (5) unemployment and work in "bad" jobs. The variables in each cluster are said to affect crime for reasons related to all of the leading crime theories. Poor parenting practices, for example, are said to reduce control, increase strain, and foster the social learning of crime. Agnew then describes how these clusters are related to one another and how they work together to affect crime. In doing so, he draws heavily on previous integrated theories, particularly Thornberry's (1987) interactional theory. Among other things, Agnew argues that the clusters are reciprocally related to one another. For example, poor parenting causes peer delinquency, and peer delinquency causes poor parenting. The clusters also interact in affecting crime and one another. For example, poor parenting is more likely to lead to crime among those high in peer delinquency. Also, prior crime leads to subsequent crime under certain conditions. While Agnew's general theory has not yet been fully tested, data and preliminary tests are generally supportive of its major propositions (see Agnew, 2005; Agnew and Brezina, 2012; Muftic et al., 2014; Rebellon, 2010; Ngo and Paternoster, 2014; Zhang et al., 2012).

While most integrated theories describe how the key variables from the leading crime theories are related, certain integrated theories take a different approach. They point to a central causal process that is said to affect crime for reasons related to several crime theories. Cullen's social support theory (Chapter 49) is an example. Cullen focuses on the extent to which social support is provided to others and argues that social support affects crime for reasons related to strain, social control, and social learning theories. The concept of social support is explicitly and implicitly discussed in a number of crime theories. Cullen draws on these theories and the literature on social support in developing his theory. According to Cullen, social support has a direct causal effect on crime; it has a causal effect on other variables that influence crime, such as social control; and it influences the effect of other variables on crime (e.g., strain is most likely to lead to crime when social support is low). Cullen, then, achieves integration by highlighting and elaborating on a common theme in several crime theories. (Cullen and Colvin [Colvin et al., 2002] proposed that their respective theories be combined into a still more general theory of crime, one that takes account of both the individual's level of social support and the coercion to which he or she is subject.)

Many additional examples of integrated theory can be given (e.g., Bernard, 1990; Bernard et al., 2009; Braithwaite in Chapter 19; Catalano and Hawkins, 1996; Colvin 2000; ; Gold, 1963, Hagan et al., 1987; Johnson, 1979; Miethe and Meier, 1994; Pearson and Weiner, 1985; Tittle, 1995, 2004; Vila, 1994; Wilcox et al. in Chapter 39). Such theories hold the potential to substantially improve our explanation of crime and so are viewed favorably by many criminologists. It is important to note, however, that not everyone agrees that integration is a good strategy (see Krohn and Ward, 2016).

The most common objection is that the theories being integrated are often based on opposing assumptions (see Hirschi, 1989). Therefore, integration is impossible without fundamentally altering the theories that are being combined. For example, strain theory assumes that the motivation to crime (the frustration and anger that individuals experience) is variable. Such variation explains the variation in crime. Many control theories, however, assume that the motivation to crime is largely constant. That is, everyone experiences more or less the same amount of motivation for crime (greed, anger, etc.). Variation in crime is explained by variation in social restraints or controls. People high in control do not act on their motivations for crime, while people low in control often do. Given

these opposing assumptions, how does one integrate strain and control theory in a way that preserves the integrity of both?

Likewise, differential association theory assumes that our society is characterized by cultural conflict, with some individuals being exposed to definitions that are conducive to crime. Social control theory, however, assumes that our society is largely conventional. It denies that people engage in crime because of pro-criminal definitions. At most, ineffective socialization results in amoral individuals, those who believe that crime is neither good nor bad. Once more, theoretical integration seems impossible without substantially altering at least one of the theories involved. Given this situation, theorists such as Hirschi (1979, 1989) have questioned the strategy of integration and have instead suggested that we focus on the development of individual theories. Hirschi contends that the potential of most crime theories is far from tapped (see Agnew, 2011; Bernard and Snipes, 1996; Elliott et al., 1979, 1985; Krohn and Ward, 2016; and Messner et al., 1989 for excellent discussions of these issues, including critiques of Hirschi's argument).

Three Major Integrated Theories

While many integrated theories of crime have been developed, no one theory dominates the literature. That is, criminologists have not yet embraced a particular integrated theory as *the* theory of crime. This section describes three efforts to integrate theories that have attracted some attention. Each draws on a range of theories to list those key variables that affect crime and to describe how these variables are related to one another. The first theory focuses on those factors that create a general propensity or disposition for crime; the second theory describes how criminal acts result when people with certain characteristics encounter certain types of settings; and the third focuses on how a key variable—climate change—affects the many causes of crime.

Catalano and Hawkins's Social Development Model

Catalano and Hawkins's social development model (SDM), presented in Chapter 46 (an essay coauthored with Christopher Cambron), is one of the most prominent integrated theories. The SDM draws on Hirschi's social bond theory (Chapter 16), Sutherland's differential association theory (Chapter 7), and Akers's social learning theory (Chapter 9). It also takes a life course or developmental approach to crime (Part XIII), examining the onset, escalation, maintenance, and desistence from crime. Further, the approach considers the effect of individual traits and position in social structure, including class, gender, and race/ethnicity. These are exogenous or external factors in the model, and they are said to impact crime through their effect on the independent variables in the SDM.

The SDM model draws on Hirschi to argue that crime is partly a function of attachments to prosocial groups, such as parents and teachers, and commitment to conventional institutions, such as school and work. Individuals with strong attachments and commitments are less likely to engage in crime because they do not want to jeopardize these bonds. Also, they are more likely to develop beliefs that condemn crime. The model draws on differential association and social learning theories to argue that crime is also a function of attachments and commitments to antisocial individuals and groups, including antisocial parents and peers. Bonds to these groups may directly increase the likelihood of crime and may lead to beliefs favorable to crime.

The model further describes how the bonds to pro- and antisocial individuals and groups are formed, drawing on social learning theory. Individuals must believe they have the opportunity to get involved with pro- or antisocial

others, they must get involved with these others, they must possess the skills to successfully interact with them, and they must receive rewards for such interaction. The rewards not only create bonds to pro- or antisocial groups, they also directly affect crime. For example, individuals who receive good grades and praise from teachers are less likely to engage in crime, while those who receive praise from gang members and money from crime are more likely.

The SDM describes how these processes play out over the life course (Catalano et al., 2005). In doing so, it takes account of the varying social influences over the life course. For example, the family is especially important in childhood, but the peer group and school become increasingly important in adolescence. And the SDM describes how the bonds formed during one period of life may affect those at later periods. Further, the SDM describes those external or exogenous factors that affect the social development process. Such factors include individual traits, such as those described in Part XII. They include position in the social structure, as indexed by factors such as class, gender, age, and race/ethnicity (see Parts VII, VIII, IX, XIII). And they include external constraints, such as the extent to which parents monitor and sanction antisocial behavior. These exogenous factors affect the opportunities for interacting with pro- and antisocial others and for receiving rewards from them. The likelihood that individuals will engage in crime is said to be a function of the balance between the pro- and antisocial forces to which they are subject.

The SDM is somewhat complex, combining elements from many theories. The best way to gain a good sense of the theory is by studying Figure 46.1 in Chapter 46. The theory has been subject to empirical tests, and studies generally support its major propositions (Catalano and Hawkins, 1996; Cambron et al., 2019; Catalano et al., 2005). Beyond that, the theory is notable for the range of successful policy interventions that it inspired. Many of these interventions are discussed in the final part of Chapter 46. Certain data however, challenge the theory. Some of the external variables in the theory—such as individuals' traits and position in the social structure—continue to have a direct effect on crime after taking account of the independent variables in the theory. Also, while the theory explains much of the variation in crime, it also leaves a good deal unexplained. This may be because it excludes certain key variables, such as strain variables and measures of those situations conducive to crime, such as those described in Wikström's situational action theory.

Wikström's Situational Action Theory

Wikström's situational action theory (SAT), presented in Chapter 47, also draws on several theories of crime, particularly learning, control, and routine activities theories (Wikström, 2017, 2019; Wikström et al., 2012; Wikström and Treiber, 2016). The theory incorporates three main factors in explaining crime: (1) propensity, or how individuals differ in the desire or motivation to offend; (2) the situations or the settings that individuals encounter; and (3) the interaction of propensity with settings.

First, SAT defines crimes as acts that violate moral rules embedded in the law. Individuals are said to differ in their propensity for crime, with this difference primarily a function of their morality or how strongly they believe they should follow certain moral rules. Morality influences the "action alternatives" that people perceive in certain settings, including whether they perceive crime as a viable option. The propensity for crime is also a function of their self-control, which refers to the ability to act in accordance with one's moral rules when pressured or tempted to engage in crime. SAT does not deny that other factors may affect the propensity for crime, but these other factors are said to impact crime through their effect on morality and self-control. That is, these other factors are said to be "causes of the causes." The social development model, by contrast, states that bonds to and rewards from prosocial and antisocial others, in addition to moral beliefs, directly affect crime.

Second, SAT states that individuals with a propensity for crime do not necessarily engage in crime. Crime is also a function of the settings they encounter and, especially, how they perceive these settings. Two individuals may perceive the same setting in rather different ways; for example, one individual at a shopping mall may perceive numerous opportunities for theft, while the other may not notice any such opportunities. The way in which individuals perceive settings is a function of their characteristics and the characteristics of the setting. According to SAT, it is important to determine if individuals believe they are in settings that threaten or provide opportunities for the satisfaction of their desires. These threats and opportunities create some motivation to act. Also important is the perceived moral context of the setting. Moral context refers to the moral norms in a setting and the extent to which these norms are enforced through informal and formal controls. An adolescent interacting with parents, for example, may believe that her parents strongly condemn drug use and will sanction her for such use. But an adolescent interacting with peers may believe the opposite.

Third, in perhaps the most distinctive part of the theory, SAT describes how persons and settings *interact* to produce crime or conformity. Imagine that an individual feels some motivation to act, given the perceived threats or opportunities in a situation. Whether the individual considers crime as an option depends on his or her moral beliefs and the perceived moral context of the situation. If the person condemns crime and believes that crime is condemned by others in the situation, crime is not considered an option. The person conforms out of habit. Alternatively, if the person holds beliefs favorable to crime and believes that others in the situation do as well, crime is seen as the only option. The person engages in crime out of habit. For example, imagine an adolescent at a party where alcohol is available. If the adolescent believes it is acceptable to drink and believes that others at the party feel the same way, the adolescent will drink out of habit.

In other cases, motivated individuals rationally deliberate over whether to engage in crime. This happens when individuals condemn crime but others in the situation try to pressure or entice them to engage in crime. Whether individuals respond with crime depends on their level of self-control. Deliberation also occurs when individuals approve of crime but others in the situation are believed to disapprove. Whether crime occurs depends on the ability of these others to deter individuals, perhaps through the threat of sanction. Crime, then, is a function of the interaction between the characteristics of individuals and the characteristics of settings. SAT makes some interesting predictions here, such as the prediction that self-control is only relevant to crime when individuals who condemn crime are tempted or pressured to engage in crime by others. The social development model, by contrast, devotes little attention to the characteristics of settings or situations, as well as the interaction between individuals and settings.

SAT also devotes some attention to the "causes of the causes," including those factors that influence levels of morality and self-control, the nature of settings, and whether people with certain characteristics encounter settings conducive to crime. For example, the morality of individuals influences the likelihood that they will encounter settings conducive to crime (e.g., those who approve of drug use will seek out settings that support drug use). Wikström and his colleagues have collected data to test SAT, finding support for its propositions, most notably the central proposition that crime is most likely when individuals with a propensity for crime are in settings conducive to crime (Wikström et al., 2012; also see Pauwels et al., 2018).

Agnew's Theory of Climate Change and Crime

Agnew's theory of climate change and crime, presented in Chapter 48, takes a different approach to integrated theory. Most integrated theories begin by describing how the variables from different theories affect one another and work together to affect crime. That is, integration is the explicit goal of these theories. Agnew, by contrast, begins by

asking how a particular factor—climate change—may affect crime. He then argues that there is good reason to believe that climate change will affect virtually all of the leading causes of crime. Climate change will increase strain, reduce social control, reduce social support, foster beliefs favorable to crime, contribute to traits conducive to crime, increase opportunities for crime, and foster social conflict. The effects of climate change will be both direct and indirect. For example, the higher temperatures associated with climate change will function as a type of strain. This strain, in turn, will contribute to traits conducive to crime, such as negative emotionality. Given these many effects, Agnew argues that climate change, even though neglected by criminologists, will become one of the major forces driving crime as the century progresses. Agnew, then, presents an integrated theory in which a single variable (albeit one with many dimensions) affects the leading causes of crime, with these causes also affecting one another.

Agnew's theory not only directs attention to the far-ranging effects of climate change but also provides a model for the application of crime theories. Drawing on this model, you might attempt to explain why other "master" variables affect crime. For example, you might describe how variables such as class, sex/gender, age, and race/ethnicity affect the many causes of crime. These variables serve as indicators of the individual's position in society, and so have received much attention from criminologists—most of whom were trained as sociologists. But, as Agnew demonstrates in Chapter 48, a complete analysis of crime must not only consider one's social position but also the natural world in which we live. (At the same time, Agnew does stress that social position affects one's exposure and ability to adapt to climate change.)

Summary

There are many integrated theories of crime, all building upon the individual theories presented in this text in important ways. Further, these integrated theories are becoming increasingly sophisticated over time. Most integrated theories still focus on the explanation of individual-level offending. Such theories, however, are starting to consider a broader range of causes, including biological, psychological, and "macro-level" factors (group, community, and societal characteristics). Many theories now argue that a complete explanation of crime requires a consideration of both "background" factors, such as level of self-control, and situational factors, such as exposure to provocations or attractive targets for crime. Many theories argue that the causal factors they examine are often reciprocally related to one another and to crime. Many theories argue that the impact of causal factors on crime often varies over the life course (e.g., parenting practices have a larger effect on crime in early adolescence versus early adulthood). Many theories recognize that the causal factors they identify interact with one another in their effect on crime (the effect of one factor on crime, like poor parenting, depends on the level of other factors, such as association with delinquent peers). And many theories argue that explanations of crime may vary somewhat according to the type of offender (e.g., male versus female, adolescence-limited versus life-course-persistent) and type of crime (see Chapter 33 by Cornish and Clarke).

So while we have not yet developed the definitive general theory of crime, there seems little doubt that our explanations are becoming more complete. At the same time, it is also quite certain that many criminologists will heed Hirschi's advice and work on the refinement of individual theories. Such work, of course, will ultimately contribute to theoretical integration since the strength of an integrated theory reflects the strength of its component parts.

References

Agnew, Robert. 2011. *Toward a Unified Criminology: Integrating Assumptions About Crime, People, and Society*. New York: New York University Press.

____. 2005. *Why Do Criminals Offend? A General Theory of Crime and Delinquency*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Agnew, Robert and Timothy Brezina. 2012. *Juvenile Delinquency: Causes and Control*, 4th edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

Akers, Ronald L. 2009. *Social Learning and Social Structure*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Akers, Ronald L. and Christine S. Sellers. 2008. *Criminological Theories: Introduction, Evaluation, and Application*, 5th edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

Barak, Gregg. 1998. *Integrating Criminologies*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

____. 2010. "Integrative Criminology." In Eugene McLaughlin and Tim Newburn (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 175–192. London: Sage.

Bernard, Thomas J. 1990. "Angry Aggression Among the 'Truly Disadvantaged.'" *Criminology* **28**: 73–96.

Bernard, Thomas J. and Jeffrey B. Snipes. 1996. "Theoretical Integration in Criminology." In Michael Tonry (ed.), *Crime and Justice*, Volume **20**, pp. 301–348. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bernard, Thomas J., Jeffrey B. Snipes, and Alexander L. Gerould. 2009. *Vold's Theoretical Criminology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Brennan, Patricia A. and Adrian Raine. 1997. "Biosocial Bases of Antisocial Behavior: Psychophysiological, Neurological and Cognitive Factors." *Clinical Psychology Review* **17**: 589–604.

Cambron, Christopher, Richard F. Catalano, and J. David Hawkins. 2019. "The Social Development Model." In David P. Farrington, Lila Kazemian, and Alex R. Piquero (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Catalano, Richard F. and J. David Hawkins. 1996. "The Social Development Model: A Theory of Antisocial Behavior." In J. David Hawkins (ed.), *Delinquency and Crime: Current Theories*, pp. 149–197. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Catalano, Richard F., Jisuk Park, Tracy W. Harachi, Kevin P. Haggerty, Robert D. Abbott, and J. David Hawkins. 2005. "Mediating the Effects of Poverty, Gender, Individual Characteristics, and External Constraints on Antisocial Behavior: A Test of the Social Development Model and Implications for Developmental Life-Course Theory." In David P. Farrington (ed.), *Integrated Developmental and Life-Course Theories of Offending: Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **14**, pp. 93–124. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Cloward, Richard A. and Lloyd Ohlin. 1960. *Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquency Gangs*. New York: Free Press.

Colvin, Mark. 2000. *Crime and Coercion: An Integrated Approach to Chronic Criminality*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Colvin, Mark, Francis T. Cullen, and Thomas Vander Ven. 2002. "Coercion, Social Support, and Crime: An Emerging Theoretical Consensus." *Criminology* **40**: 19–42.

Einstadter, Werner J. and Stuart Henry. 2006. *Criminological Theory*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Elliott, Delbert S., Suzanne S. Ageton, and Rachelle J. Canter. 1979. "An Integrated Theoretical Perspective on Delinquent Behavior." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **16**: 3–27.

Elliott, Delbert S., David Huizinga, and Suzanne S. Ageton. 1985. *Explaining Delinquency and Drug Use*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Elliott, Delbert S., David Huizinga, and Scott Menard. 1989. *Multiple Problem Youth: Delinquency, Substance Use, and Mental Health Problems*. New York: Springer-Verlag.

Farrington, David. 2005. "The Integrated Cognitive Antisocial Potential (ICAP) Theory." In David P. Farrington (ed.), *Integrated Developmental and Life-Course Theories of Offending: Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **14**, pp. 73–92. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Gold, Martin. 1963. *Status Forces in Delinquent Boys*. Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan.

Hagan, John, John H. Simpson, and A. R. Gillis. 1987. "Class in the Household: A Power-Control Theory of Gender and Delinquency." *American Journal of Sociology* **96**: 265–299.

Hirschi, Travis. 1989. "Exploring Alternatives to Integrated Theory." In Steven F. Messner, Marvin D. Krohn, and Allen E. Liska (eds.), *Theoretical Integration in the Study of Deviance and Crime: Problems and Prospects*, pp. 37–49. Albany: State University of New York Press.

____. 1979. "Separate and Unequal Is Better." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **16**: 34–38.

Johnson, Richard E. 1979. *Juvenile Delinquency and Its Origins*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Krohn, Marvin and Jeffrey T. Ward. 2016. "Integrating Criminological Theories." In Alex R. Piquero (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*, pp. 318–335. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Kubrin, Charis E., Thomas D. Stucky, and Marvin D. Krohn. 2009. *Researching Theories of Crime and Deviance*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lahey, Benjamin B. and Irwin D. Waldman. 2005. "A Developmental Model of the Propensity to Offend During Childhood and Adolescence." In David P. Farrington (ed.), *Integrated Developmental and Life-Course Theories of Offending: Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **14**, pp. 15–50. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Messner, Steven F. 2012. "Morality, Markets, and the ASC." *Criminology* **50**: 5–25.

Messner, Steven F., Marvin D. Krohn, and Allen E. Liska, eds. 1989. *Theoretical Integration in the Study of Deviance and Crime: Problems and Prospects*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Miethe, Terance D. and Robert F. Meier. 1994. *Crime and Its Social Context*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Muftic, Lisa R., Jonathan A. Grubb, Leana Allen Bouffard, and Almir Maljevic. 2014. "The Impact of Life Domains on Juvenile Offending in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Direct, Indirect, and Moderating Effects in Agnew's Integrated General Theory." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* **51**: 816–845.

Ngo, Fawn T. and Raymond Paternoster. 2014. "Contemporaneous and Lagged Effects of Life Domains and Substance Use: A Test of Agnew's General Theory of Crime and Delinquency." *Journal of Criminology* **3**: 1-20.

Pauwels, Lieven J.R., Robert Svensson, and Helmut Hirtenlehner. 2018. "Testing Situational Action Theory: A Narrative Review of Studies Published between 2006 and 2015." *European Journal of Criminology* **15**: 32–55.

Pearson, Frank S. and Neil Alan Weiner. 1985. "Toward an Integration of Criminological Theories." *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* **76**: 116–150.

Rebellon, Cesar J. 2010. “Agnew, Robert: Integrated Theory.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*, pp. 13–18. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rebellon, Cesar J., J. C. Barnes, and Robert Agnew. 2015. “A Unified Theory of Crime and Delinquency.” In Matt DeLisi and Michael G. Vaughn (eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Biosocial Criminology*, pp. 3–21. New York: Routledge.

Robinson, Matthew B. and Kevin M. Beaver. 2009. *Why Crime? An Interdisciplinary Approach to Explaining Criminal Behavior*. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.

Taylor, Terrance J. 2010. “Elliott, Delbert S., Suzanne S. Ageton, and Rachelle J. Canter: Integrated Perspective on Delinquency.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*, pp. 288–292. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Thornberry, Terence P. 1996. “Empirical Support for Interactional Theory: A Review of the Literature.” In J. David Hawkins (ed.), *Delinquency and Crime: Current Theories*, pp. 198–235. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

____. 1987. “Toward an Interactional Theory of Delinquency.” *Criminology* **25**: 863–891.

Thornberry, Terence P. and Marvin D. Krohn. 2005. “Applying Interactional Theory to the Explanation of Continuity and Change in Antisocial Behavior.” In David P. Farrington (ed.), *Integrated Developmental and Life-Course Theories of Offending: Advances in Criminological Theory*, Volume **14**, pp. 183–210. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Thornberry, Terence P., Marvin D. Krohn, Alan J. Lizotte, Carolyn A. Smith, and Pamela K. Porter. 1998. “Taking Stock: An Overview of Findings from the Rochester Youth Development Survey.” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Washington, DC.

Thornberry, Terence P., Alan J. Lizotte, Marvin D. Krohn, Carolyn A. Smith, and Pamela K. Porter. 2003. “Causes and Consequences: Findings from the Rochester Youth Development Survey.” In Terence P. Thornberry and Marvin D. Krohn (eds.), *Taking Stock of Delinquency*, pp. 11–46. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.

Tittle, Charles R. 1995. *Control Balance: Toward a General Theory of Deviance*. Boulder, CO: Westview.

____. 2004. “Refining Control Balance Theory.” *Theoretical Criminology* **8**: 395–428.

Turner, Michael G. and Kristie R. Blevins. 2009. “Theoretical Integration.” In J. Mitchell Miller (ed.), *21st Century Criminology: A Reference Handbook*, pp. 340–355. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Vila, Bryan. 1994. “A General Paradigm for Understanding Criminal Behavior: Extending Evolutionary Ecological Theory.” *Criminology* **32**: 311–359.

Wikström, Per-Olof H. 2017. “Character, Circumstances, and the Causes of Crime.” In A. Liebling, S. Maruna, and L. McAra (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*, pp. 415–444. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

____. 2019. “Situational Action Theory: A General, Dynamic And Mechanism-Based Theory of Crime and Its Causes.” In Marvin D. Krohn, Nicole Hendrix, Gina Penly Hall, and Alan J. Lizotte (eds.), *Handbook on Crime and Deviance*, pp. 259–281. New York: Springer.

Wikström, Per-Olof H., Dietrich Oberwittler, Kyle Treiber, and Beth Hardie. 2012. *Breaking Rules*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Wikström, Per-Olof H. and Kyle Treiber. 2016. “Situational Theory: The Importance of Interactions and Action Mechanisms in the Explanation of Crime.” In Alex R. Piquero (ed.), *The Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 415–444. New York: John Wiley.

Zhang, Yan, George Day, and Liqun Cao. 2012. “A Partial Test of Agnew’s General Theory of Crime and Delinquency.” *Crime and Delinquency* **58**: 856–878.

46.
Social Development Model*

Christopher Cambron

Richard F. Catalano

J. David Hawkins

This selection describes a major integrated theory of crime, the social development model (SDM). This perspective was advanced by Richard Catalano and J. David Hawkins (1996), and it is now presented here in collaboration with Christopher Cambron. The SDM draws on several theories discussed earlier in this volume, most notably Hirschi's social bonds theory (Chapter 16), Sutherland's differential association theory (Chapter 7), and Akers's social learning theory (Chapter 9). In doing so, the SDM describes a path to prosocial behavior and a path to antisocial behavior, with each path illustrated in the figure in this chapter.

Individuals on the prosocial path believe they have opportunities for prosocial behavior; for example, they believe they can engage in activities with their (prosocial) parents and get help at school. They take advantage of these opportunities by becoming involved with these prosocial others; for example, they spend time with parents and participate in school activities. Further, they have the social, emotional, and cognitive skills to succeed in their prosocial involvements. As a consequence, they are praised by their parents, get good grades at school, etc. These prosocial rewards reduce the likelihood of crime, an idea at the heart of social learning theory. These rewards also create strong bonds to prosocial others and groups; that is, individuals come to like these others and build up an investment in conventional activities. These bonds further reduce the likelihood of crime, an idea at the heart of social bonds theory. These bonds also lead to prosocial beliefs; for example, individuals believe it is important to be honest, help others, and follow school rules. And these beliefs are a third factor reducing the likelihood of crime, an idea at the heart of differential association, social bonds, and social learning theory.

Individuals, however, may also move along an antisocial path. Here they believe they have antisocial opportunities; for example, they believe that lots of kids in their community are involved in illegal behaviors and that their parents engage in antisocial behaviors, such as drug use. They become involved with these antisocial others; for example, they spend much time with delinquent peers in their community. And they have the skills to succeed at antisocial behavior; for example, they are seldom caught for their misdeeds. The rewards they get from their antisocial behavior—such as money, status from delinquent peers, and pleasure from drug use—increase the likelihood of crime, an idea at the heart of social learning theory. And, as a result of these rewards, they bond with antisocial others and develop beliefs favorable to crime. These bonds and beliefs further increase the likelihood of antisocial behavior, ideas at the heart of social learning and differential association theories.

The extent to which individuals engage in pro- versus antisocial behavior depends on the relative strength of each path. For example, are they more strongly bonded to pro- or antisocial others? And the strength of each path depends on three sets of factors: (1) The individual's position in the social structure, including age, gender, class, and race/ethnicity. For example, very poor individuals are more likely to live in communities where they are exposed to antisocial others. (2) External constraints on behavior; for example, do their parents set clear rules,

closely monitor behavior, and consistently sanction rule violations? If so, juveniles are much less likely to be exposed to antisocial opportunities and obtain rewards from their involvement in antisocial activities. (3) And individual characteristics, such as negative emotionality and low constraint.

This chapter briefly describes how these processes play out over the life course. For example, prosocial bonds to family in childhood increase the likelihood of forming strong bonds to school. And this chapter describes the ways in which the SDM has led to interventions designed to reduce crime, including interventions aimed at increasing prosocial opportunities, involvement, and rewards—as well as reducing antisocial opportunities, involvement, and rewards. Many of these programs are part of the Communities That Care program, one of the more prominent and successful delinquency control programs in the country. As noted in the introduction to this section, the SDM has received much support (see, e.g., Hawkins et al., 2004).

References

Catalano, Richard F. and J. David Hawkins. 1996. "The Social Development Model: A Theory of Antisocial Behavior." In J. David Hawkins (ed.), *Delinquency and Crime: Current Theories*, pp. 149–197. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Hawkins, J. David, Brian H. Smith, Karl G. Hill, Rick Kosterman, Richard F. Catalano, and Robert D. Abbott. 2004. "Understanding and Prevention Crime and Violence: Findings from the Seattle Development Project." In Terence P. Thornberry and Marvin D. Krohn (eds.), *Taking Stock: An Overview of Findings from Contemporary Longitudinal Studies*, pp. 255–312.

This chapter presents an overview of the social development model (SDM)—a general theory of human behavior that integrates research on risk and protective factors into a coherent model. Section I specifies the model constructs and their hypothesized relationships to prosocial and antisocial behaviors. Section II provides a synthesis of what we have learned from empirical tests of social development hypotheses for predicting pro- and antisocial behaviors. Section III highlights interventions derived from the SDM and summarizes their impact on pro- and antisocial behaviors. The chapter concludes with a final section presenting future directions for SDM-based research.

---

* Reprinted with permission from: Cambron, Christopher, Richard F. Catalano, and J. David Hawkins. 2019. "The social development model." *The Oxford Handbook of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology,* pp. 223–247.

Theoretical Background

...The SDM is a general theory of human behavior that attributes the etiology of both prosocial and antisocial behaviors to similar developmental processes (Hawkins and Weis 1985; Catalano and Hawkins 1996b). Rooted in criminological theory, the SDM organizes research on risk and protective factors (Hawkins, Catalano, and Miller 1992) and integrates the strongest empirically supported elements of control theory (Hirschi 1969), social learning theory (Bandura 1977), and differential association theory (Sutherland 1973; Matsueda 1988) into a model of human behavior. The goal of this synthesis is to provide more explanatory power than its component theories (Catalano and Hawkins 1996b). Consistent with the tradition of integrated theories in criminology, the SDM attends to underlying theoretical assumptions of human behavior and recognizes the importance of understanding behavior in a developmentally appropriate context (Farrington 2011).

Control theory contributes the etiology of both delinquency and conformity to the SDM. The strength of bonds to prosocial groups such as families or schools and commitment to conventional lines of behavior lead to the adoption of the beliefs of those groups that inhibit antisocial behavior (Hirschi 1969). The SDM incorporates this perspective but departs from control theory by hypothesizing a similar process of antisocial bonds, commitment, and beliefs as a plausible causal mechanism in the development of antisocial behavior. The SDM recognizes that bonds among typically prosocial entities like families may in fact contribute to antisocial behavior if the beliefs and actions of those groups are antisocial. Alternatively, control theory hypothesizes that antisocial behavior emanates from weak, inconsistent, or nonexistent social bonds to families, schools, communities, or peers. In an additional departure from control theory, the SDM hypothesizes that involvement, while playing a role in the theory, is not a part of the social bond itself. Involvement with prosocial others has seen the least empirical support for its ability to inhibit antisocial behavior (Kempf 1993).

Social learning theory (Akers 1977; Bandura 1977; Krohn, Massey, and Skinner 1987) hypothesizes that antisocial behavior is learned in group settings through processes of rewards and punishment. Social learning informs the SDM as a means of identifying which patterns of behavior are adopted, reinforced, and discouraged and the mechanism by which this occurs. Social, emotional, and cognitive skills are also acquired through group interaction. These skills influence the development and application of emotional and behavioral self-regulation necessary for inhibiting antisocial behavior. As applied to the field of criminology by Akers, deviance is conceptualized from a social learning perspective as an interactional process of imitating and modeling observed deviance in society. The SDM hypothesizes syntheses of social learning and control theory that allows stable and interactional antisocial processes to take shape among antisocial groups bonded by shared commitment and beliefs. In the SDM, skills derived from social learning are necessary to access rewards from group interactions.

Sutherland's differential association theory (Sutherland and Cressey 1970; Sutherland 1973; Matsueda 1988) is incorporated into the SDM as an impetus for parallel but separate causal paths for prosocial and antisocial processes. Similar to social learning at its core, humans are hypothesized to learn deviant behavior socially and act out deviance once they have accrued antisocial associations of a sufficient quantity and quality. Antisocial bonds may overcome prosocial bonds in an individual's life and tip the scales toward antisocial behavior. Each operates concurrently within the SDM, with antisocial bonds increasing the likelihood of antisocial behavior and prosocial bonds increasing the likelihood of prosocial behavior. The SDM includes pathways from either antisocial rewards or beliefs to antisocial behavior apart from the influence of deviant others as postulated by differential association.

The SDM hinges on basic assumptions about human nature that coincide with key assumptions made by control theory, social learning, and differential association. First, humans are hypothesized to be satisfaction seekers who primarily act in accordance with their perceived self-interest. Pure self-interest in the Hobbesian sense is unlikely possible given the constraints of ability, opportunity, and prior socializing experiences and the interplay of long- and short-term perceived self-interest. As such, constrained self-interest is thought to influence both prosocial and antisocial behaviors. Second, a normative consensus for prosocial and antisocial behavior exists in society, and prosocial behaviors are typically preferred by individuals. The strength and content of pro- and antisocial motivations makes value conflicts inevitable even if everyone knows the "rules of the game." Even in the presence of a consensus for normative behavior, antisocial behavior has three separate sufficient conditions for development. Antisocial behavior arises when (1) prosocial socialization breaks down, prosocial opportunities are not available, or lack of skills preclude effective involvement with prosocial groups or the environment fails to reinforce prosocial behavior; (2) antisocial behavior develops in the presence of prosocial bonding when perceived benefits of the antisocial behavior outweigh potential costs; or (3) individuals are bonded to antisocial families, schools, communities, or peers and, in turn, act in accordance with the norms and beliefs of these groups (Catalano and Hawkins 1996b).

The SDM hypothesizes two socialization paths through which pro- and antisocial behavior arises. Behavior is ultimately determined by an individual's beliefs and values. Strong beliefs in the moral order or prosocial values lead to prosocial behaviors, while lack of belief in the moral order or beliefs in antisocial values lead to antisocial behaviors. The path to antisocial behavior is afforded two more avenues not contingent on antisocial beliefs. If sufficient rewards exist for antisocial behavior or sufficient pressures to maintain antisocial bonds are felt, an individual with a strong belief in the moral order may still commit antisocial acts. Beliefs and values are derived from strong bonds to social groups and the accompanying commitment that an individual feels to that social group. On each path, four socialization processes establish a social bond between an individual and a socialization unit: (1) perception of opportunities for pro- or antisocial behavior; (2) involvement with pro- or antisocial groups; (3) social, emotional, and cognitive skills that enhance involvements and make recognition or reward more likely; and (4) the perception of rewards for interactions with pro- or antisocial groups. Skills are hypothesized as necessary to access rewards from either pro- or antisocial interaction. An individual will become bonded and committed to prosocial or antisocial socialization units depending on the prosocial or antisocial nature of these opportunities, involvements, and reward. The more strongly an individual is bonded to a socialization unit, the more likely he or she is to adopt its beliefs. Behavior will be prosocial or antisocial depending on the strengths of prosocial and antisocial beliefs of those to whom they are bonded (Catalano and Hawkins 1996b).

The social development process is affected by three exogenous factors: position in the social structure, individual constitutional factors, and external constraints. These factors have demonstrated their ability to predict antisocial behavior (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990; Dishion et al. 1991; Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber 1998; Herrenkohl, Hawkins et al. 2001; Wasserman et al. 2003; Moffitt et al. 2011). The SDM hypothesizes that these factors exert influence on perceived opportunities for involvement with a group, skills for interacting with that group, and perceived rewards for interaction. These exogenous factors are hypothesized to be fully mediated by social development processes (Catalano and Hawkins 1996b).

The SDM is explicitly developmental, originally with four submodels for developmental phases defined by major contextual changes that take place in development: birth to school entry, elementary school, middle school, and high school. While the same general social development processes operate, each submodel specifies the socialization units involved and the form of prosocial or antisocial behavior most prevalent during the developmental period. Environmental changes between submodels lead to a new mix of opportunities and rewards and, as a result, new paths toward pro- or antisocial behavior. For example, the shift from middle school to high school typically provides

access to a wider array of perceived opportunities to use illegal drugs that were not perceived as available during middle school or earlier developmental periods. Conversely, new prosocial opportunities are also available with the expansion of extracurricular, educational, and civic opportunities as youth mature and are able to negotiate these new opportunities and transportation becomes more independent. These new sources of environmental opportunities, involvement, skills, and recognition can significantly alter social bonds, beliefs, and behaviors. Typically, families are the dominant socializing unit during the preschool period, while peer groups take on a more prominent socializing role as children reach middle school.

Across developmental periods, perceptions of rewards, social bonds, beliefs, and behaviors in earlier developmental periods make their presence felt in later developmental periods through conditioning perceptions of opportunities for pro- and antisocial behavior in the new developmental period. For example, a child who has a strong, prosocial family bond in the preschool period will perceive more prosocial opportunities during the elementary school period. Even as this reciprocal effect across developmental periods is noted, transitions into new and novel environments provide significant potential for new pro- or antisocial bonding as previous opportunity and reward structures may lose their immediacy and new influences move in to occupy that space (Catalano and Hawkins 1996b). The general model is depicted in Figure 46.1...

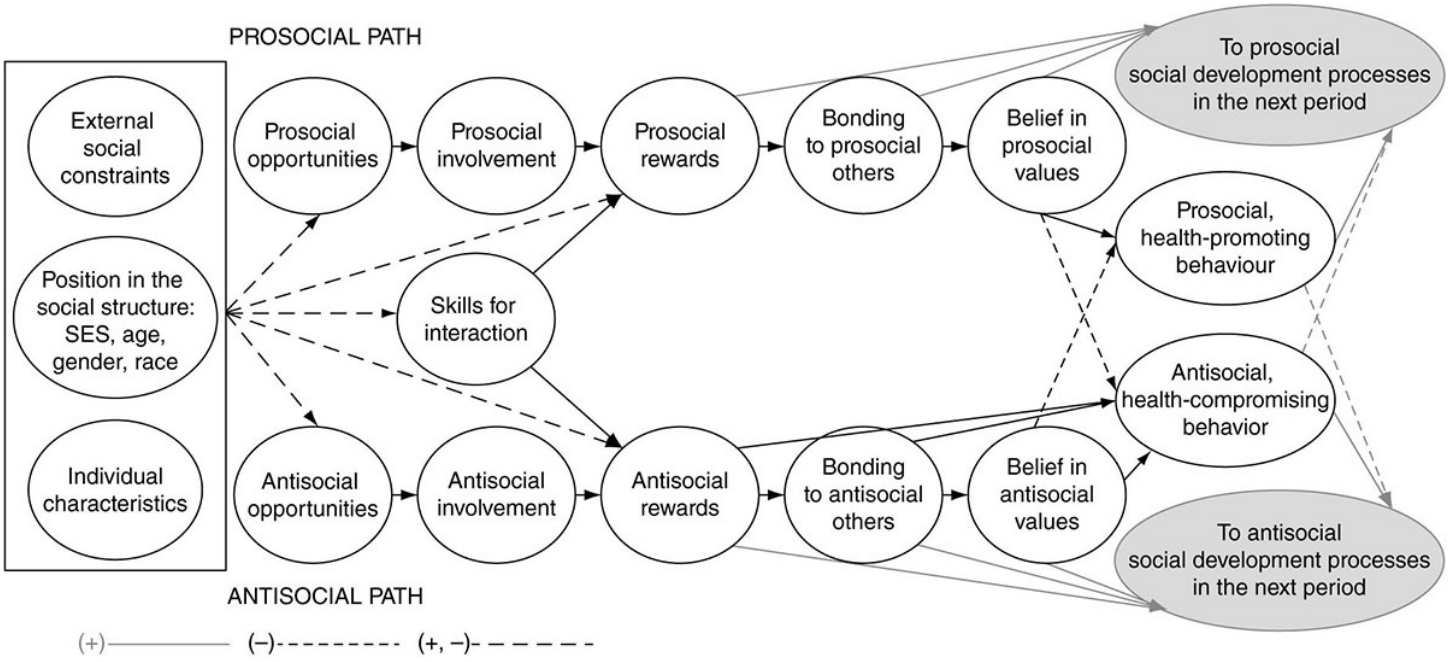


FIGURE 46.1

SDM-Inspired Interventions

...The hypotheses of the SDM have directed the construction and implementation of interventions aimed at increasing healthy adolescent behaviors and reducing problems including drug use, crime and violence, reduced mental health, and risky sexual activity (Hawkins, Von Cleve, and Catalano 1991; Hawkins, Catalano, and Associates 1992; Catalano and Hawkins 1996a; Catalano et al. 1998; Haggerty et al. 1999). These programs have sought to enhance prosocial opportunities, involvement, and rewards for children among families, schools, and individuals and to enhance skillful performance such that involvement is more likely to be recognized or rewarded. Increasing prosocial opportunities, involvement, skills, and rewards is expected to increase prosocial bonding and beliefs and, ultimately, prosocial behaviors. The constructs and hypothesized relationships on the prosocial path of the SDM are referred to as the social development strategy (Catalano and Hawkins 1996a). In addition, these programs have addressed antisocial opportunities, involvement, skills, and rewards to reduce the likelihood of antisocial bonding, beliefs, and behavior. The social development strategy provides parents, teachers, and community members more broadly with specific tools to maximize prosocial opportunities, involvement, skills, rewards, bonding, and beliefs and reduce antisocial constructs on the antisocial path in classrooms, families, and the community. Classroom strategies for teachers include proactive classroom management, interactive teaching, and cooperative learning (Abbott et al. 1998); parent and family strategies include behavior management skills founded on clear and consistent communication and application of boundaries of behavior, positive reinforcement, academic support skills, and cooperative family engagement to build developmentally appropriate opportunities and reduce opportunities for antisocial behavior (Kosterman, Hawkins, et al. 2001). Strategies taught to children and reinforced by parents and teachers include interpersonal problem-solving skills such as communication, decision making, negotiation, and conflict resolution, and refusal skills encompassing awareness of antisocial social influences, identification of consequences of risky behaviors, and generation of alternatives to antisocial behaviors among peers (Hawkins, Von Cleve, and Catalano 1991; Hawkins et al. 1992). In community efforts, stakeholders apply the social development strategy in their daily interactions with children and youth (Kim et al. 2015).

Empirical research evaluating intervention effects of SDM-inspired interventions provides further evidence of the utility of social development constructs and hypotheses for understanding and improving child and adolescent physical, mental, and social health. Four prevention programs guided by the social development strategy have been evaluated: the Seattle Social Development Project (SSDP), Guiding Good Choices (GGC; formerly titled Preparing for the Drug Free Years), Raising Healthy Children (RHC), and Communities That Care (CTC). SSDP provided a social development intervention to teachers, parents, and children in the first through sixth grades in selected Seattle public schools.... Comparisons between the full intervention group and the control group have found a broad array of positive significant outcomes from age 7 through age 30 (Hawkins, Kosterman, et al. 2008). Elementary school effects showed reductions in externalizing behaviors and initiation of alcohol use and delinquency for the full intervention group and improved school-based outcomes specifically among low-income students (Hawkins, Von Cleve, and Catalano 1991; Hawkins et al. 1992; O'Donnell et al. 1995b; Abbott et al. 1998; Hawkins et al. 2001). For teachers who were able to successfully incorporate the social development strategy into their teaching practices, classroom-specific analyses found increases in positive student reports of school opportunities, involvement, rewards, and bonding at the end of grade 6 for the full intervention group as compared to the control group. Overall intervention effects on educational achievement at the end of grade 6 were partially mediated by improvements in SDM constructs as hypothesized and can, therefore, be partially attributed to successful implementation of the social development strategy (Abbott et al. 1998). Significant outcomes observed by age 18 included lower lifetime violence

and sexual activity, reduced current heavy alcohol use, improved school bonding, and increased academic achievement among the full intervention group; lower rates of teen pregnancy and parenthood among middle-income students; and decreased grade repetition among low-income students (Abbott et al. 1998; Hawkins et al. 1999). From ages 21 to 27, the full intervention group showed reduced mental and emotional health problems, more consistent condom use, and higher levels of constructive engagement as indicated by positive school and employment outcomes (Lonczak et al. 2002; Hawkins et al. 2005; Hawkins, Kosterman, et al. 2008). By age 30, students in the full intervention condition of SSDP had significantly lower incidence of sexually transmitted infections (STI), with larger effects for African Americans. Further analyses investigated mediation of intervention effects by SDM constructs specifically for African Americans. Positive family environment as measured by family bonding, clear rules, parental monitoring, and low family conflict; school bonding; and delayed initiation of sexual behavior mediated the influence of the SSDP intervention on STI hazard (Hill et al. 2014).

Guiding Good Choices is a five-session parenting skills intervention based on the social development strategy designed to mitigate family-based substance use risks (Catalano et al. 1998; Haggerty et al. 1999).... Investigations of treatment effects have indicated significant improvements in targeted SDM behaviors for intervention group parents compared to controls. These include increases in clear communication of standards for behavior, rewards for prosocial behavior, involvement with their children, parental monitoring of children's substance use, as well as significant reductions in spousal conflict (Kosterman, Hawkins, et al. 2001). These early changes in social development constructs were followed by later inhibition of growth in alcohol use, delinquency, and depressive symptoms in the children of families in the GGC condition (Mason et al. 2003, 2007). While alcohol use is expected to increase as children move into high school, the GGC intervention group showed significantly lower rates of growth in alcohol use from age 12 to 15.5, improvements in parental norms against substance use, and improved stability for proactive family management practices compared to controls (Park et al. 2000). By grade 12, children of intervention families demonstrated reduced symptoms of depression and an overall lower rate of growth in depressive symptoms throughout adolescence compared to control families (Mason et al. 2007). Long-term follow-up indicated that young women whose families participated in the intervention at age 12 demonstrated significantly lower rates of alcohol abuse disorder at age 22 (Mason et al. 2009). Reduced alcohol abuse at age 22 was partially mediated by improved prosocial skills.

Raising Healthy Children (RHC) employed the social development strategy across parent, teacher, individual, and peer domains to universally support positive youth development and prevent substance use among students in first through eighth grade of public schools and in parents and teens from grades 9 to 12 in a suburban district near Seattle, Washington (Catalano et al. 2003).... Examinations of outcomes found significant early improvements in parent and teacher reports of academic performance and commitment to school, as well as significant increases in teacher-reported social competency and significant decreases in teacher-reported antisocial behaviors of students in the experimental condition compared to controls at 18-month follow-up (Catalano et al. 2003). These early changes in elementary school social development constructs preceded subsequent inhibited growth of alcohol use and marijuana use from middle into high school for the intervention group compared to the control. Intervention effects were substantial, with reductions of .91 standard deviations for alcohol use and 1.44 standard deviations for marijuana use for the intervention group compared to the control group (Brown et al. 2005a).

Communities That Care (CTC) is a community-focused system for preventing and reducing adolescent delinquency and alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use through training community stakeholders to target elevated risk factors in the community and implement evidence-based preventive interventions and the social development strategy (Hawkins, Catalano, and Associates 1992; Catalano and Hawkins 1996a). The Community Youth Development Study (CYDS) is a randomized controlled trial of CTC implemented in 24 towns across seven states.... By the eighth grade, youths in the longitudinal panel in CTC communities were found to have significantly higher levels of overall

protection using an omnibus test to assess all protective factors specified in the SDM, and significantly higher mean levels of community opportunities for prosocial involvement, school recognition for prosocial involvement, interaction with prosocial peers, and social skills as compared to control communities after adjusting for fifth-grade levels (Kim et al. 2015). In addition to increases in prosocial SDM constructs, CYDS analyses have found significant reductions for CTC as compared with control communities for alcohol and delinquency initiation in the eighth grade, with sustained effects at tenth grade, as well as reduced risk of violence at twelfth grade (Hawkins, Brown, et al. 2008; Hawkins et al. 2009). Significant differences between CTC and control communities in sustained abstinence from alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, and delinquency were found at the end of the twelfth grade (Hawkins et al. 2012). Community-level analyses also determined that CTC communities employed more science-based approaches to prevention and saw increased levels of collaboration across community sectors; specifically improving their collaboration on prevention-related services (Brown et al. 2007; Gloppen et al. 2016). Service system factors are important proximal outcomes of CTC that are related to more effective prevention strategies, increased community protective factors, reduced risk factors, and improved adolescent health and behavior outcomes….

In sum, the SDM has survived nearly 30 years of conception, development, and testing, and, in the process, researchers have found support for many of its hypotheses. As we have recognized here, there has also been some consistency among specific hypotheses that have not been confirmed. Perhaps most importantly, the SDM has been used to design, implement, and test preventive interventions, which has both provided stronger support for causal hypotheses and improved the health and well-being of numerous individuals, families, schools, and communities.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What theories does the social development model (SDM) integrate?
2. What are the key steps in the antisocial and prosocial paths?
3. How might the paths to antisocial and prosocial behavior differ at ages 4, 15, and 25? In particular, how would the key actors and institutions differ at each age?
4. How would the SDM explain the fact that males are more likely than females to engage in crime?
5. Drawing on the SDM, what strategies should we employ for reducing crime?
6. Does the SDM neglect any key theories in your view? How might the incorporation of these changes change the SDM?

47.
Situational Action Theory*

Per-Olof H. Wikström

In his situational action theory (SAT), Per-Olof Wikström (2010: 1001) defines crimes as moral actions—"actions guided by what is the right or wrong thing to do or not to do in a particular circumstance." From this perspective, crime is seen as a viable course of action (for some) and chosen, either deliberately or habitually. Crime as moral action is explained more fully by integrating perspectives that emphasize individual propensity toward offending with those that point to situational or environmental factors that facilitate crime. In short, SAT claims that crime is most likely to be chosen when someone with a high level of crime propensity encounters a moral context that is encouraging of crime (see also Wikström, 2004, 2006, 2019; Wikström and Treiber, 2009). The name of Wikström's theory flows from this insight: crime is action that is committed in a situation.

In terms of individual propensity, SAT puts a primacy on the role of individual morality (i.e., how strongly one feels one should adhere to moral beliefs), but it also recognizes the potential importance of self-control. As such, Wikström's SAT draws upon and integrates several other theories in order to explain propensity: (1) learning theories, with their emphasis on "definitions," or attitudes toward law violation (see Part III); and (2) control theories (see Part V), particularly those that underscore the importance of self-control (Chapter 17).

Although propensity—as a function of morality and self-control—is treated as a necessary condition for crime in SAT, it is not a sufficient condition. Rather, "people do not act in a social vacuum. It is important to bear in mind that propensities always need some environmental inducement to get activated" (Wikström, 2010: 1004). In terms of environmental inducements, Wikström's SAT highlights the importance of the moral context of environmental settings—the external rules and the level of enforcement thereof. For example, some settings strongly enforce rules by supervising actions and sanctioning rule violations. Other settings are more "permissive" of a wide range of behaviors, thereby providing situational inducements to engage in crime. With attention paid to environmental inducements to crime, Wikström's SAT thus integrates ideas from theories within environmental criminology (see Part XI).

SAT posits that it is the interaction between individual propensity and the moral context of environmental settings that affects perceptions of behavioral choices and, ultimately, whether the action chosen is crime. More fully, through the principle of moral correspondence, SAT claims that when there is alignment between individual morality and the moral context of the setting, action will likely follow suit. In other words, crime is a likely action when an individual's morality is crime-encouraging and he or she is in an environmental setting in which the moral rules are crime-encouraging as well. Conversely, crime is an unlikely action when both individual morality and the moral rules of the setting are crime-discouraging. However, when there is conflict between individual morality and the moral rules of environmental settings in which people find themselves (i.e., moral non-correspondence), controls—either self-control or external control in terms of rule enforcement—become more critical in determining action (Wikström and Treiber, 2007). For example, self-control can determine the action of someone with individual crime-discouraging moral beliefs in a crime-inducing setting (e.g., an adolescent who does not think it is right to engage in underage drinking but is tempted at a party with friends). Or external

controls (supervision, likelihood of punishment) can determine the action of someone with individual crime-encouraging beliefs in a crime-discouraging setting.

Beyond developing SAT, Wikström has been engaged with colleagues in testing the theory through the Peterborough Adolescent and Young Adult Development Study—PADS (see, e.g., Wikström and Treiber, 2016; Wikström et al., 2012). And many others have now tested SAT as well (see Pauwels et al., 2018, for an overview). Studies provide much support for SAT, particularly the key proposition that crime is most likely when those with a criminal propensity are exposed to criminogenic settings. Further, such factors appear more predictive than broader social structural conditions, such as social disadvantage. In fact, analyses suggest that criminal propensity and criminogenic exposure mediate the relationship between social disadvantage and crime. This finding supports Wikström's (2010) contention that theories that discuss the influence of broader social conditions (see Parts II and IV, for example), to the extent that such conditions affect individual propensity and exposure to crime-inducing settings, are best conceived of as theories of "the causes of the causes" (i.e., they do not directly cause crime, but they cause the factors that do directly cause crime).

References

Pauwels, Lieven J. R., Robert Svensson, and Helmut Hirtenlehner. 2018. "Testing Situational Action Theory: A Narrative Review of Studies Published between 2006 and 2015." *European Journal of Criminology* **15**:32–55.

Wikström, Per-Olof H. 2004. "Crime as Alternative: Towards a Cross-Level Situational Action Theory of Crime Causation." In Joan McCord (ed.), *Beyond Empiricism: Institutions and Intentions in the Study of Crime—Advances in Criminological Theory*. ***Volume 13***, pp. 1–37. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

____. 2006. "Individuals, Settings, and Acts of Crime: Situational Mechanisms and the Explanation of Crime." In Per-Olof H. Wikström and Robert J. Sampson (eds.), *The Explanation of Crime: Context, Mechanisms, and Development*, pp. 61–107. New York: Cambridge University Press.

____. 2010. "Wikström, Per-Olof H.: Situational Action Theory." In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*, pp. 1000–1008. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

____. 2019. "Situational Action Theory: A General, Dynamic and Mechanism-Based Theory of Crime and Its Causes." In Marvin D. Krohn, Nicole Hendrix, Gina Penly Hall, and Alan J. Lizotte (eds.), *Handbook on Crime and Deviance*, pp. 259–281. New York: Springer.

Wikström, Per-Olof H., Dietrich Oberwittler, Kyle Treiber, and Beth Hardie. 2012. *Breaking Rules: The Social and Situational Dynamics of Young People's Urban Crime*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wikström, Per-Olof H. and Kyle Treiber. 2007. "The Role of Self-Control in Crime Causation: Beyond Gottfredson and Hirschi's *General Theory of Crime*." *European Journal of Criminology* **4**: 237–264.

____. 2009. "Violence as Situational Action." *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* **3**: 75–96.

____. 2016. "Social Disadvantage and Crime: A Criminological Puzzle." *American Behavioral Scientist* **60**: 1232–1259.

Why do people engage in acts of crime? Two central ideas in criminological theory are that people's crime involvement is dependent on (1) *who* they are (their characteristics and experiences) and (2) *where* they are (the features of the environments in which they take part). Although many criminological theories have contributed considerably to our understanding of the role of person and environmental differences in crime causation, these two strands of thinking are rarely combined into a developed integrated theoretical framework....

A further problem with many criminological theories is that they are not always fully explicit about what the theory is meant to explain (i.e., what crime is). Since an explanation is always an explanation *of* something, it is difficult to

develop an effective account of the causes of crime without a clear definition of what crime is (i.e., of what the theory aims to explain).

---

* SAGE Reference, from Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory, Per-Olof H. Wikström, pages 1000–1008, 2010; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

Situational Action Theory

Situational action theory (SAT) is a newly developed general theory of moral action and crime that aims to integrate person and environmental explanatory perspectives within the framework of a situational action theory. It seeks to address central problems in mainstream criminological theory: the unclear definition of crime, the poor understanding of causal mechanisms, the poor integration of levels of explanation, and the inadequate understanding of the role of development and change. The theory builds upon insights from various conventional criminological theories and research traditions as well as draws upon social and behavioral sciences theory and research more generally.

The fundamental arguments of situational action theory are that

1. Acts of crime are moral actions (actions guided by what is the right or wrong thing to do or not to do in a particular circumstance) and therefore need to be explained as such.
2. People engage in acts of crime because they (a) come to see such acts as a viable action alternative and (b) choose (habitually or deliberately) to carry them out.
3. The likelihood that a person will come to see an act of crime as an action alternative and choose to carry out such an act ultimately depends on his or her crime propensity (grounded in his or her action-relevant moral values and emotions and capability to exercise self-control) and its interplay with his or her exposure to criminogenic settings (defined by their action-relevant moral rules and the level of their enforcement).
4. The role of broader social conditions and their changes (like social integration and segregation), and the role of individual development and change (life histories), should be analyzed as the causes of the causes.
5. Relevant causes of the causes of crime are only those social conditions and aspects of life-histories that can be demonstrated to influence the development of people's propensity (morality and ability to exercise self-control) and influence the emergence of, and people's differential exposure to, settings with particular criminogenic features (settings whose moral context and deterrent qualities may encourage or discourage acts of crime)....

Crime as Moral Action

There is little doubt that when explaining crime we explain human actions. Actions are sequences of bodily movements—or withheld bodily movements—under the guidance of the actor (e.g., speaking or hitting). However, any particular action can, in principle, be defined as a crime and there are variations over historic time and between places (e.g., countries) in what kinds of action are regarded as crime. Moreover, specific actions, like hitting or even shooting another person, may be considered crimes in some circumstances but not in others.

What defines crime is thus not any particular type of action but the fact that carrying out a particular action (or refraining from carrying out an action) in a particular circumstance is regarded as breaching a rule of conduct stated in the law. The question of explaining why some acts are regarded as crime and others are not is an important question. However, a question that is different [is] the question of why people follow or breach the rules of law. The

question of why we have the rules of conduct we have, and why people follow or breach those rules, may be regarded as the two prime questions of criminology. Here we are only concerned with the latter.

Situational action theory argues that crime is best analyzed as moral action. SAT defines *moral action* as action guided by moral rules about what it is right or wrong to do in a particular circumstance. It defines *crimes* as breaches of moral rules defined in law. The *law* is a set of moral rules of conduct, but far from all moral rules are regulated by law. Acts of crime are thus viewed as a special case of moral rule breaking more generally. The advantage of conceptualizing crime as breaches of moral rules defined in law is that it focuses on what all kinds of crime, in all places, at all times, have in common: namely, (moral) rule breaking. What is to be explained by a theory of moral action is thus why people (follow and) breach moral rules, and what is to be explained specifically by a (sub-) theory of crime is why people (follow and) breach moral rules defined in law.

Any action that is guided by rules of what is right or wrong to do in a particular circumstance is a moral action. There is no difference in that respect between, for example, lying to a friend, stealing a CD in a shop, or blowing up a person by a roadside bomb. All are examples of moral actions. Hence, they can all be explained within the same theoretical framework. What may differ in the explanation of different kinds of moral action (acts of crime) is not the process (the perception–choice process) leading up to the action, but the content of the moral context (the action-relevant moral rules) and a person's morality (the action-relevant moral values and emotions) that drive the process and the broader social processes (the causes of the causes) that generate particular moral contexts (contents) in which people develop and act. In all cases (e.g., lying, shoplifting, or roadside bombing), the actor has to perceive the particular action as a viable alternative and choose to carry out the act. However, the specific moral background that guides whether, for example, an act of shoplifting is perceived as an action alternative will differ from that which guides whether an act of roadside bombing is perceived as an action alternative.

The Importance of Rules and Rule Guidance

Situational action theory is based on explicit assumptions about human nature and its relation to social order. Humans are viewed as essentially rule-guided actors and social order as fundamentally based on the adherence to common rules of conduct (the social order is essentially a moral order). Explaining human moral action and crime has to do with understanding the interplay between common moral rules of conduct and a person's moral rules in shaping his or her moral development and providing grounds for his or her moral actions.

Most criminological theory does not have an explicit theory of action. Theories that do generally allude to the importance of choice (as guided by self-interest and rationality) [do so] without further detailing its role in the explanation of crime. SAT accepts that rationality and self-interest (at times) play a role in guiding human action, but it reasons that on a more fundamental level humans are rule-guided actors. Human actions (including acts of crime) therefore ultimately have to be explained as rule-guided action.

The Situational Mechanism

Most criminological theory focuses on either the role of the person or the environment in the explanation of crime. Situational action theory is developed to overcome the common (but unfruitful) divide between person and environmental explanations of moral action and crime. It achieves this by proposing a situational mechanism (a perception–choice process), which links the person and his or her environment to his or her actions. It postulates that all action (including acts of crime) is ultimately an outcome of (1) what action alternatives a person perceives

and, on that basis, (2) what choices he or she makes. In contrast to most choice-based theories, which focus on how people choose among predetermined alternatives, situational action theory stresses the importance of why people perceive certain action alternatives (and not others) in the first place. Perception of action alternatives thus plays a more fundamental role in explaining action than the process of choice (which is secondary to perception of action alternatives).

SAT provides a clear demarcation criterion for evaluating which person and environment factors (correlates) are potential causes or merely correlates; only those person and environmental factors that can be demonstrated to (directly or indirectly) affect how a person perceives his or her action alternatives and make choices are causally relevant in the explanation of moral action (and acts of crime). "Indirectly" refers to factors that may be considered causes of the causes—for example, factors that affect a person's development of morality and capability to exercise self-control or factors that affect the emergence of criminogenic settings.

Two Kinds of Agency: Deliberation and Habit

One of the most difficult problems in explaining human action is reconciling the role of deterministic and voluntaristic forces in the explanation of action. Most criminological theories appear to operate with (at least) an implicit assumption that human action is deterministic. SAT aims to integrate behavioristic (deterministic) and voluntaristic (free will) approaches to the explanation of moral action and crime. It does so by recognizing that human action (including law abidance and acts of crime) may be (predominantly) caused either by habit or rational deliberation.

Man is the source of his or her actions. To say that people have agency is to say that they have causal powers (powers to make things happen). SAT asserts that people exercise agency within the context of rule-guided choice. Rule guidance can take the form of either deliberation or habit. Habitual action involves automatically applying experience-based moral rules of conduct to a setting, while deliberation involves taking moral rules of conduct into consideration when actively choosing between action alternatives. Habitual action is oriented toward the past, while deliberate action is oriented toward the future. When people act habitually, they routinely apply past experiences to guide current action; when they act deliberately they try to anticipate future consequences of perceived action alternatives and choose the best course of action.

Only in choice processes when people deliberate do they exercise free will and are they subject to the influence of their ability to exercise self-control (internal control) or respond to deterrence cues (external controls). Whether or not a choice of action tends to be an outcome of deliberation or habit depends on the actor's familiarity with the circumstances in which he or she operates. Habits are created by repeated exposure to particular circumstances, which leads to action becoming automated, rather than deliberate, in these and similar circumstances.

The Role of Motivation: A Necessary but Not Sufficient Cause of Moral Action

People commit acts of crime for all sorts of reasons (e.g., greed, anger, or boredom). There are no particular motives (e.g., desires, needs, or wants) that make people breach moral rules (commit acts of crime). However, to claim that motivation has no role in crime causation is a mistake. According to SAT, motivation is a necessary but not sufficient cause of moral action. It is part of the process that moves people to action and has a general directional influence on what kinds of acts of moral rule breaking a person may perceive and consider.

The two main classes of motivation in crime causation are temptation and provocation. These motivations come about as an outcome of the person-setting interaction. A temptation occurs (1) when there is a connection between a person's desires (wants, needs) and an opportunity to fulfill a desire or (2) when there is an opportunity for a person to fulfill a commitment he or she has made. A provocation occurs when a friction (an unwanted external interference) causes a person to feel anger or annoyance.

While acknowledging that motivation (temptations, provocations) has a general directional influence on moral action, SAT states that the crucial factor in the explanation of moral action is the interplay between a person's morality (values, emotions) and the moral context in which he or she operates. The outcome of this interaction will serve as a moral filter determining whether or not he or she will act upon temptations or provocations. Many people are, for example, disadvantaged and frustrated for various reasons, without breaking moral rules (or committing acts of crime) to overcome or change conditions perceived to cause their disadvantage or frustration.

Person and Propensity

Propensity may be defined as a person's tendency to see crime (or a particular type of crime) as an action alternative and to act upon such an alternative. The idea that people have different propensities to engage in acts of crime is the idea that if different people encounter the same setting they will respond differently. Some are more likely than others to engage in acts of crime.

Individuals will vary in their propensity to engage in a particular moral action depending on their moral values and emotions. Moral emotions (shame, guilt) attached to violating a particular moral rule may be regarded as a measure of the strength with which a person holds a particular moral rule. For example, while many people may think it is wrong to steal something from another person, some may feel very strongly about this while others may not. Those who feel less strongly about stealing from others may be regarded as having a higher propensity to engage in such action.

An individual's ability to exercise self-control (i.e., to act in accordance with his or her morality in the face of temptations and provocations) can also significantly affect his or her crime propensity. An individual's ability to exercise self-control is influenced both by relatively stable individual characteristics (executive capabilities) and momentary influences, such as high levels of stress and intoxication (see Wikström & Treiber, 2007). However, the ability to exercise self-control is only important when an individual perceives crime (or moral rule breaking) as an alternative, because self-control exerts its effects through the process of choice. When an individual deliberates over whether or not to commit an act of crime, his or her ability to exercise self-control influences the process of choice and plays a causal role in his or her decision to offend (or not offend).

Environment and Exposure

People do not act in a social vacuum. It is important to bear in mind that propensities always need some environmental inducement to get activated. Individuals will vary in their exposure to moral contexts (external moral rules and their enforcement linked to particular settings). The extent to which moral rule following in a particular context is enforced (supervised and breaches sanctioned) may be regarded as the strength of the moral context. The idea that settings vary in their criminogenic features is the idea that the same person will respond differently to different kinds of settings. A person will be more likely to engage in acts of crime in some settings than in others.

A key assumption of SAT is that human action (and development) is directly influenced only by the settings in which people take part. A *setting* may be defined as the part of the environment that an individual, at a particular moment in time, can access with his or her senses, including any media present. The key environmental factor that determines whether or not a setting is criminogenic is its moral context (the moral rules that apply to the particular setting and their levels of enforcement). The configuration of the settings a person takes part in (during a specific period of time) may be referred to as his or her *activity field* (e.g., daily or weekly activity field). A person's activity field is the environment to which he or she is exposed during a specific period.

In terms of analyzing action, the moral context of settings is significant because it is within such a context that opportunity (which may create temptation if connecting to a person's particular desires and needs or his or her commitments) and friction (which may create provocation if evoking feelings of annoyance or anger in a person) appear. Temptation and provocation are key motivational elements emerging from the person-setting interaction. However, as discussed earlier, it is the moral context of the setting (its moral rules and deterrent qualities), and its interaction with a person's morality and ability to exercise self-control, that, by acting as a moral filter, will determine whether or not a person will act on a particular temptation or provocation.

The Importance of Causal Interaction: Propensity and Exposure

... All human action is a result of the interaction between person and environment. According to situational action theory, all moral actions are an outcome of a person's propensity (to engage in the particular moral action) and his or her exposure to environmental inducements (to engage in the particular moral action):

$$\text{Propensity} \times \text{Exposure} = \text{Action}$$

The situational action theory does not propose a simple additive model of propensity and exposure but that propensity and exposure interact to determine a person's crime involvement (Figure 47.1). Specific combinations of propensity and exposure are likely to produce specific outcomes in terms of a person's level of crime involvement.

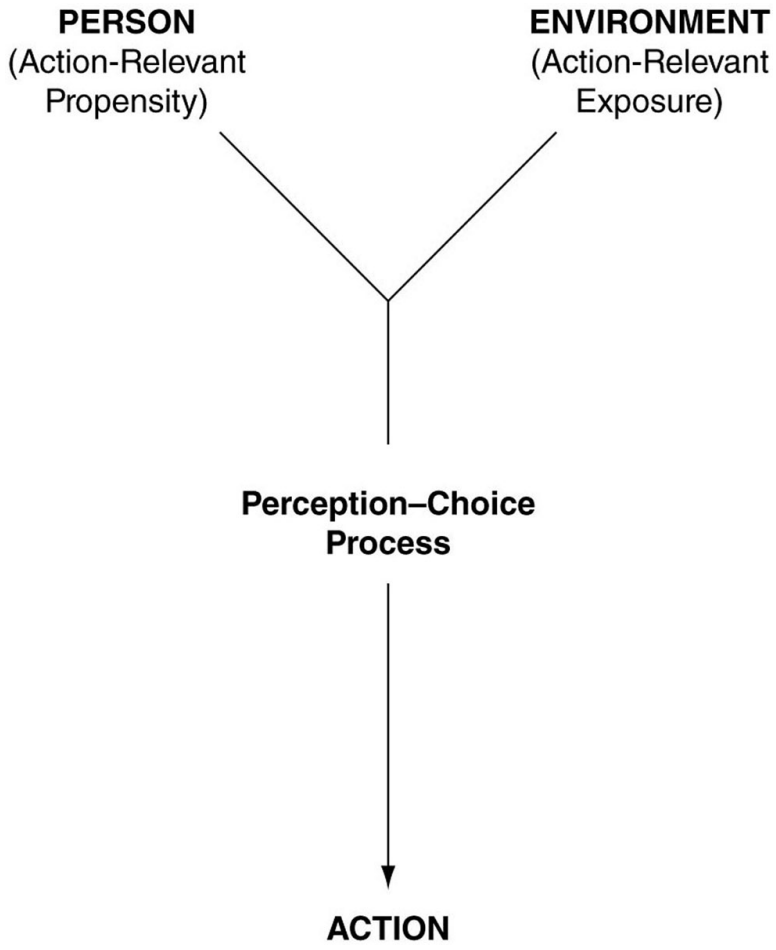


FIGURE 47.1 The Basic Situational Model

The *action-relevant propensity* is those moral values and emotions (supported or undermined by the person's capability to exercise self-control) that are relevant to a particular moral action. For example, if we aim to explain acts of shoplifting, all those moral values and emotions relevant to seeing acts of shoplifting as an action alternative and relevant to choosing such an alternative for action constitute the action-relevant propensity.

The *action-relevant exposure* is those criminogenic features of the moral context of a setting (the perceived moral rules and their level of enforcement) that are linked to acting on a particular temptation or provocation.

The *causal process* that links the interplay of propensity and exposure to action is the moral perception–moral choice process earlier detailed. This process can, depending on the familiarity of the circumstances, be predominantly habitual (expressing moral habits) or deliberative (expressing moral judgments) in nature.

To say that propensity and exposure (their interaction) are causes of action (acts of crime) does not deny the role of agency. Propensity and exposure set the context within which people exercise agency (act deliberately or by habit). Agency is exercised through the perception–choice process. Propensity and exposure (their interaction) is the input to this process. To say that propensity and exposure are causal factors means that changes in propensity and exposure will lead to changes in action through their impact on the perception–choice process.

The Principle of Moral Correspondence and the Role of Controls

At the core of the proposed propensity–exposure interaction in SAT is the principle of moral correspondence. The principle states that moral action is guided by the interplay between a person's morality and the moral rules of the setting in which he or she operates. A person's morality (values and emotions) can either encourage or discourage a particular moral action, and the moral rules of the setting in which he or she takes part can either encourage or discourage a particular moral action. The combination of the two gives four ideal type possibilities (as illustrated in Table 47.1).

TABLE 47.1 What Makes a Particular Moral Action Likely: The Principle of Moral Correspondence and the Role of Controls Illustrated

Moral Rules of Setting			
		Encouraging	**Discouraging**
Morality	Encouraging	Action likely, controls irrelevant	Action dependent on level of deterrence
	Discouraging	Action dependent on capability to exercise self-control	Action unlikely, controls irrelevant

In the case where both the person's morality and the moral rules of the setting encourage a particular moral action, this action will be likely (assuming that the person is tempted or provoked to act in this way). By contrast, in the case in which both the person's morality and the moral rules of the setting discourage a particular moral action, this action will be unlikely.

In the case where a person's morality discourages a particular action, but the moral rules of the setting encourage it, his or her capability to exercise self-control (internal control) will play a crucial role in determining whether or not he or she will act. For example, the capability to exercise self-control may come into play in the action choice for a young person who does not think it is right to smoke cannabis but may be tempted to try it out because he or she attends a "coffee shop" (a place where smoking pot is legal) in Amsterdam with a group of friends who all want to and think it is okay to smoke cannabis.

In the case where a person's morality encourages a particular moral action, but the moral rules of the setting discourage it, the level of deterrence (external controls) may play a key role in a person's action choice. For example, if an act is illegal but the person does not have a moral problem with carrying it out, the perceived risk of getting caught (and the perceived consequences thereof) may come into play as a causally relevant factor in his or her choice process.

Controls will thus come into play only when there is a discrepancy between a person's morality and the moral rules of the setting. This may be referred to as *the principle of the conditional relevance of controls* (because internal and external controls are only causally relevant under certain moral conditions).

All this depends on there being an initial motivation (temptation, provocation) to act in a certain manner. If a person is not tempted or provoked to carry out a certain kind of act, his or her moral values and emotions, and the moral rules of the setting, that apply to this particular kind of action (and the controls) lack relevance for his or her actions.

The Role of Development and Change

According to situational action theory, changes in a person's actions stem from changes in his or her propensity (i.e., changes in his or her morality and ability to exercise self-control) and/or changes in his or her exposure (i.e., changes in the time he or she spends in criminogenic settings). Changes in propensity and exposure cause changes in action (e.g., engagement in acts of crime) by bringing about change in the moral perception–moral choice process that guides moral action.

$$(\text{Change})\text{Propensity} + (\text{Change})\text{Exposure} = (\text{Change})\text{Action}$$

Changes in propensity and exposure are not unrelated from a developmental perspective. Changes in exposure may lead to changes in propensity through changes in the processes of socialization and habituation. For example, if a person spends increasing time in moral contexts favoring a certain kind of moral rule breaking, this may (through the processes of moral education and moral habituation) affect his or her propensity to engage in such acts. Changes in propensity may lead to changes in exposure through changes in setting selection. For example, if a person comes to find a certain moral action (e.g., drug use) morally acceptable (and is motivated to commit that action), the person may be more likely to seek out settings that support that action. However, in the explanation of crime causation, it is crucial not to confuse the question of why a person chooses to be in a certain setting and the effect of this setting on the person's actions (acts of crime). Why people are exposed to certain environments (of which self-selection is one cause) and how these environments affect their actions (e.g., acts of crime) are two different questions. The former is a question that belongs to the explanation of the causes of the causes, and the latter to the explanation of the causes of a person's engagement in acts of crime.

The Role of Broader Social Conditions

SAT maintains that to be able to explain the role in crime causation of broader social factors and social change, as well as individual development and life histories, one first has to understand what moves people to action (to engage in acts of crime). Knowing what moves people to engage in acts of crime gives us guidance as to which broader social conditions, and aspects of people's life histories, are important candidates as the causes of the causes (or indirect causes) that move people to action.

People act and develop in settings. According to SAT, the key to understanding the potential role of broader social conditions (like disadvantage, integration, and segregation) in crime causation (as possible causes of the causes) is to understand how these social conditions and their related social processes help create particular kinds of settings (with particular moral contexts and levels of enforcement) in which people develop (form their morality and ability to exercise self-control) and act (express their morality and ability to exercise self-control).

Societies vary in their social integration (cohesion and trust) and moral integration (homogeneity of moral values held by the population and their correspondence to moral rules expressed by the larger society, e.g., in terms of laws). It is reasonable to assume that societies that have higher degrees of social and moral integration will have less moral rule breaking and crime because there will be less room for a discrepancy between individual and collective moral rules.

Changes in the broader social environment in which people's daily lives are embedded (e.g., political, economical, and social changes of relevance to moral actions) may instigate changes in the kinds of moral contexts present in a society and the processes of exposure of different groups of people to particular moral contexts. In turn, this may (in

the longer term) affect the moral education of the population, or segments of the population, and (in the short term) affect the moral contexts in which people, or groups of people, act.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What individual-level theories of crime does Wikström draw upon in his articulation of SAT? Explain.
2. What environmental theories of crime does Wikström draw upon in his articulation of SAT? Explain.
3. What are the components of "crime propensity" according to SAT? How do those components work in conjunction with environmental settings to influence crime?
4. What is the principle of moral correspondence (and the related principle of the conditional relevance of controls) according to SAT, and what role do controls (internal and external) play in this principle?

48.
Climate Change and Crime*

Robert Agnew

Climate change is perhaps the greatest challenge to face humanity. As Agnew states in this chapter, climate change involves a rise in average temperature, changing patterns of precipitation, a rise in sea level, and an increase in extreme weather events—including heat waves, droughts, severe cyclones/hurricanes, floods, and wildfires. Climate change, in turn, leads to habitat change, negative health effects, food and freshwater shortages, threats to livelihood, increased migration, social conflict, and so on. Climate change and its varied effects have already started, and there is much evidence that they will get progressively worse in coming years (see websites below). Agnew wrote this chapter about a decade ago, drawing on the best research at that time. More recent research confirms the predictions made by Agnew; in fact, certain of this research suggests that the future may be even bleaker than Agnew describes. We encourage you to familiarize yourself with this research by consulting the web sites of such organizations as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the United Nations organization charged with examining climate change; and the U.S. Global Change Research Program, which coordinates and integrates the federal research on climate change. In addition, news sites such as that of the New York Times, describe the latest research on climate change. The key question addressed in this chapter, however, is what impact might climate change have on crime?

When many people think of climate change, they imagine physical effects such as a rise in temperature and more severe storms. But Agnew points out that climate change is also going to lead to fundamental changes in our social world. Many people will lose their livelihoods, be forced to migrate, get caught up in social conflicts, etc. And Agnew argues that both the physical and social effects of climate change are likely to lead to an increase in crime. Climate change and its effects will impact virtually all of the major causes of crime, increasing strain, reducing control, reducing social support, fostering beliefs/values favorable to crime, contributing to traits conducive to crime, creating opportunities for crime, and increasing conflict between groups over scarce resources. In some cases, the effects of climate change are straightforward. as described in this chapter. The increase in heat waves associated with climate change will function as a strain or stressor. In other cases, the effects of climate change are more indirect. The rise in temperatures, for example, often means that people are more likely to spend time outdoors. This increases the likelihood that motivated offenders will encounter attractive targets for crime and that homes will more often be left unprotected (see Chapter 36 on Routine Activity Theory). Further, the causes of crime affected by climate change will impact one another. The strains associated with climate change, for example, will foster beliefs favorable to crime.

Agnew presents an overall model of climate change in the figure in this chapter. He notes that certain research supports elements in the model, such as the effect of rising temperatures on crime. But the model as a whole has yet to receive a complete test. Criminologists, however, have come to devote increased attention to climate change and the environment more generally, as reflected in the rise of "green criminology" (e.g., *Brisman and South, 2020*).

Finally, it should be noted that while this model focuses on climate change, it provides a template for the analysis of the effect of other variables on crime. As discussed throughout this text, "master" variables such as class and

sex/gender may affect crime through their impact on most of the major causes. Class, for example, may affect exposure to certain strains, levels of social control, association with criminal others, and so on. Further, these causes frequently affect one another.

References

Agnew, Robert. 2011. "Dire Forecast: A Theoretical Model of the Impact of Climate Change on Crime." *Theoretical Criminology*. **16**: 21–42.

Brisman, Avi and Nigel South, eds. 2020. *Routledge International Handbook of Green Criminology,* 2nd edition. London: Routledge

Reprinted with permission from: Agnew, Robert. 2011. "Dire forecast: A theoretical model of the impact of climate change on crime." *Theoretical Criminology,* 16: 21–42.

Much research has focused on the environmental, health, and economic effects of climate change. Research has also begun to focus on the social effects, particularly migration and social conflict (see later). But the effect of climate change on crime has been largely neglected. This article is intended to help end this neglect by drawing on the leading crime theories to describe the potential impact of climate change on crime. Doing so is a critical task. As argued below, there is good reason to believe that climate change will become one of the major forces driving crime as the century progresses. Also, a fuller understanding of the criminogenic effects of climate change can help motivate efforts to mitigate it and aid efforts to adapt to it.

I begin by providing an overview of climate change and its effects. I then argue that climate change will promote crime by increasing strain, reducing social control, weakening social support, fostering beliefs and values favorable to crime, contributing to traits conducive to crime, increasing certain opportunities for crime, and creating social conflict. I conclude by drawing on these arguments to present a preliminary model describing the potential effects of climate change on crime. While this model makes use of the leading crime theories, it points to a range of causes seldom considered in crime research—such as increasing temperature, natural disasters, and food and freshwater shortages.

---

* Agnew, Robert. 2011. "Dire Forecast: A Theoretical Model of the Impact of Climate Change on Crime." *Theoretical Criminology*. 16: 21–42.

Climate Change and Its Effects

The Nature of Climate Change

Climate change is being driven by an increase in heat trapping gases in the atmosphere, principally carbon dioxide. This increase is largely due to human activities, especially the burning of fossil fuels and, to a lesser extent, deforestation. Carbon dioxide levels have increased from roughly 275 parts per million during the pre-industrial period to 390 parts per million today. The large share of this increase is due to developed nations, although China and India have become major emitters. Climate change involves several related phenomena, described below….

Rise in average temperature. The global average temperature is predicted to increase by 4–5 degrees C by the end of this century, perhaps before. This increase has already begun; 2000–2010 was the warmest decade on record, with 2010 being tied for the warmest year on record. The average annual temperature in the United States has increased by more than 2 degrees F over the last 50 years, with a 5 to 7 degree F increase in Alaska and western Canada.

Changing patterns of precipitation. The amount of rainfall will increase in some areas, primarily at higher latitudes and in the moist tropics, and decrease in others, primarily in arid and semi-arid areas. Also, the timing and nature of rainfall will change. In the mid-latitudes, it will be drier in summer (when farmers need the rain), and wetter in winter (when the risk of flooding increases). Further, rain will more often come in the form of heavy downpours, which increase flooding, erosion, and run off. These changing patterns are already evident, with the land area suffering from drought having more than doubled since the 1970s.

Rise in sea level. Sea level is rising both because of the thermal expansion of the oceans and the melting of ice sheets and glaciers, and the most recent estimates predict a rise of at least one meter this century (Cullen, 2010: 212). To provide some context, about 146 million people now live within a meter of mean sea level worldwide.

Increase in extreme weather events, including heat waves, droughts, cyclones/hurricanes, floods, and—related to this—wildfires. This increase has already begun; for example, the strength and duration of hurricanes has increased and, more generally, there has been an increase in the number of weather-related disasters in recent decades. One *possible* example of an event related to climate change is the 2003 European heat wave, which killed at least 50,000 people, caused extensive flooding and massive wildfires, and led to a 30 percent drop in the productivity of plants due to drought stress (Cullen, 2010: 51–53; Henson, 2011: 52–55).

The Effects of Climate Change

These changes will have major effects on the natural environment, health, the economy, and social life, including:

Habitat change. Grasslands will turn into deserts, and forests into grasslands. There will also be a loss of coastal wetlands and mangroves. Further, ocean habitats will change; most notably, there will be a massive loss of coral reefs due to rising ocean temperatures and acidification. Partly as a result of such habitat change, 20–30 percent of plant and animal species are at risk of extinction this century (Peake and Smith, 2009). At the same time, it is important to note that grasslands and forests will spread to new areas, such as the Arctic tundra.

Flooding of coastal areas, deltas, low-lying islands, and river basins. This is due to rising sea levels, more intense storms, and the melting of glaciers and snow cover. Hundreds of millions of people are at risk. For example, 13 of the world's largest 20 cities are on the coast.

Negative health effects. A Lancet Commission report states that 'climate change is the biggest global health threat of the 21st century,' and will 'put the lives and well-being of billions of people at increased risk' (Lancet and University College London Institute for Global Health Commission, 2009: 1693; also see Oxfam, 2009; Page and Howard, 2010; Willis, 2009). In particular, climate change will contribute to the spread of certain infectious diseases (e.g. malaria), to malnutrition and under-nutrition (more below), to diarrheal and other diseases related to water contamination, to cardio-respiratory diseases from increased air pollution, to heat stress, and to increased trauma from extreme weather events. The Global Humanitarian Forum (2009) estimates that climate change is *now* responsible for over 300,000 deaths a year.

Food and freshwater shortages. These shortages will be due to higher temperatures, drought, the melting of glaciers and snow cover (a major source of freshwater), and the salinization of coastal water sources. The area suitable for agriculture will decline in most regions, the growing season will be shorter, and crop yields will decline. Fish stocks are also threatened, due to rising ocean temperatures, increasing ocean acidity, and the spread of 'dead zones'. Over 1.3 billon people now face extreme water scarcity, and perhaps a billion more will move into the water stressed category by 2050 (IPCC, 2007: 36; also see Global Humanitarian Forum, 2009). These food and freshwater shortages, it should be noted, will occur in combination with a dramatic increase in the world population, from about seven billion today to over 10 billion by the end of this century—with most of the increase in developing countries.

The loss of and threats to livelihood. The varied effects of climate change will directly threaten the livelihoods of small farmers, herders, fishers, and those involved in coastal and snow-related tourism. About 60 percent of the workforce in developing nations— approximately 1.5 billion people—now work in these occupations (Global Humanitarian Forum, 2009). Further, climate change will impose high economic costs on nations, perhaps as much as 20 percent of World GDP by 2100 if we fail to act now (Maslin, 2009: 38–39). These costs stem not only from threats to agriculture, fishing, and tourism; but also from the need to adapt to climate change (e.g. protect coastal areas from rising sea levels) and to recover from its many negative effects (e.g. death and illness, displacement, damaged infrastructure).

Increased migration, with the growth of mega-cities in developing nations. Drought will force farmers and herders off the land; sea-level rise will force coastal inhabitants to move; social conflict will force many to flee to safer areas (more below); and extreme weather events and forest fires will destroy homes and livelihoods—again prompting migration (Buhaug et al., 2008; Kolmannskog, 2008; Raleigh et al., 2008; Reuveny, 2007). For example, millions of people in sub-Saharan Africa will be forced to move as their land turns to desert (Global Humanitarian Forum, 2009: 49). And the one meter rise in sea level now predicted by the end of this century will destroy the homes and livelihoods of 25 million people in Bangladesh alone (Oxfam, 2009). While a portion of this migration will cross borders, much of it will be internal. Many of the migrants will move to megacities in developing countries, which are often polluted, overcrowded, and lacking in basic infrastructure such as clean water and sewerage (Oxfam, 2009).

Increased social conflict. Researchers and policy analysts have argued that climate change will increase social conflict, including interstate conflict, civil war, and conflict between smaller groups within states (e.g. Abbott, 2008; Buhaug et al., 2008; Global Humanitarian Forum, 2009; Homer-Dixon, 2007; Kolmannskog, 2008; Nordas and Gleditsch, 2007; Oxfam, 2009; Pumphrey, 2008; Raleigh et al., 2008; Rubin, 2010; Smith and Vivekananda, 2007; South, 2009; White, 2009). Several reasons are offered for the increased conflict:

- Climate change will increase competition over scarce resources, including freshwater, food, fuel, and land.
- The migration produced by climate change will foster conflict, particularly when the migrants move to areas with scarce resources and there are pre-existing social divisions between the migrants and those in the receiving area.
- Climate change will weaken states. States will struggle to meet the enormous demands posed by climate change, such as maintaining infrastructure, ensuring adequate food supplies, and responding to natural disasters. The failure of some states to adequately meet these demands will engender much dissatisfaction, leading to challenges to state authority and government collapse—such that states are no longer able to exercise effective social control.
- Conflict will emerge over disputes about how to best respond to climate change. Developing countries, for example, fear that developed countries may take steps to limit their economic development.
- Related to the above, the increased poverty engendered by climate change will promote conflict, with poverty being one of the best predictors of interstate and within-state conflict (Burke et al., 2009).

It is important to note that, in making these arguments, researchers emphasize that climate change is most likely to cause conflict when it occurs in combination with other factors, particularly low levels of economic development, poor governance, and preexisting social divisions.

Case studies provide some support for these arguments, but quantitative studies have produced mixed results. Some studies find that conflict is influenced by such things as food and water scarcity, high temperature, land degradation, and population displacement; while others do not. It is beginning to appear that the effects of climate change are more likely to lead to small, localized conflicts; rather than to civil wars and interstate conflicts. This is said to be the case because the most severe effects of climate change are often confined to smaller areas and these effects rob people of the resources necessary to wage large-scale conflicts (Buhaug et al., 2008).

The Size and Timing of These Effects

As indicated, climate change has begun and has already affected millions of people in negative ways. But there is much debate over the timing, extent, and impact of future climate change. These depend on such things as economic and population growth, how quickly we move to 'green' energy sources, lifestyle changes, and aid to developing nations. Further, the models used to predict climate change still have a fair degree of uncertainty, most notably because of the difficulty of modeling 'tipping points'. For example, some fear that a small increase in temperature may dramatically increase the rate of climate change due to the release of methane—a very potent greenhouse gas—from melting permafrost and the ocean floor (e.g. Cullen, 2010; Maslin, 2009; McKibben, 2010).

But despite this uncertainty, virtually all scientists agree that the future effects of climate change will be quite substantial. There is a rough consensus among scientists that we should not allow global mean temperature to rise above 2 degrees C (Henson, 2011). But given such things as the continuing increase in carbon emissions, the lack of meaningful political agreements, and projected population and economic growth, it appears that we are headed for a 4–5 degree C increase by end of this century or sooner. This means that global food production will plummet, billions will experience freshwater shortages, a fifth of the world's population will be affected by flooding, and there will be large increases in deaths due to malnutrition, disease, and extreme weather events….

The Distribution of These Effects

Some countries and groups will suffer more than others. Some are *more exposed* to climate change and its effects (e.g. they live in areas at high risk of flooding). Some are *more vulnerable* to climate change (e.g. their economies are closely linked to climate- sensitive pursuits such as farming and fishing). And some are *less able to adapt to and recover from* climate change (e.g. the poor are less able to afford air conditioning). Those most at risk include those living in developing countries; in arid and semi-arid areas; in coastal areas and river basins; and in the Arctic (e.g. Cullen, 2010; Global Humanitarian Forum, 2009; Oxfam, 2009). They also include the poor, females, the very young, and the very old. And data suggest that these groups are more often harmed by natural disasters, including physical and mental harm, violence in the post-disaster period, and/or displacement (Bartlett, 2008; Global Humanitarian Forum, 2009: Hardy and Pandiella, 2009; Norris et al., 2002; Oxfam, 2009; Tierney, 2007; Wachholz, 2007).

The Impact of Climate Change on Crime

Climate change clearly has a range of negative effects, with the extent and severity of these effects virtually certain to increase in coming decades. Further, certain of these effects, such as the loss of livelihood, have clear implications for crime. Nevertheless, criminologists have largely ignored climate change as a source of crime, with the exception of a few 'green' or environmental criminologists (e.g. Rotton and Cohn, 2003; South, 2009; Wachholz, 2007; White, 2009, forthcoming)....

The central argument I make is that climate change may foster a range of crimes at the individual, corporate, and state levels. These crimes include individual acts of violence and theft of the type that are illegal in virtually all states; corporate crimes such as environmental pollution and bribery, which are illegal in many states; and acts of state aggression that violate international law (Maier-Katkin et al., 2009). I also briefly discuss the effect of climate change on a variety of harmful acts that are not presently defined as crimes. As critical and environmental criminologists point out, certain legal acts cause far more harm than many state-defined crimes, with these legal acts harming people, nonhuman animals, and the natural environment more generally....

Climate change may increase crime for reasons identified by the major crime theories. Most notably, climate change will increase exposure to a range of strains conducive to crime; as well as affecting crime for reasons related to social control/disorganization, social support, social learning, trait, opportunity, and critical theories.

Climate Change as a Source of Strain

Climate change will expose large numbers of people to a range of strains or stressors conducive to crime (see Agnew, 2006, for an overview of strain theory). These strains lead to negative emotions, such as anger, frustration, and fear; thereby creating pressure for corrective action. Crime is one possible response, with crime being used to reduce or escape from strain (e.g. theft, illegal immigration), seek revenge against the source of strain or related targets (e.g. vandalism, terrorism), or alleviate negative emotions (e.g. illicit drug use). And, as noted further below, these strains may also reduce social control, foster beliefs favorable to crime, and lead to criminogenic traits.

Climate-Related Strains

- *An uncomfortable increase in temperature, including average temperature and temperature spikes*. Several studies have examined the effect of temperature on crime, particularly violence (for reviews and selected studies, see Anderson, 1989, 2001; Bushman et al., 2005; Cheatwood, 1995, 2009; Ikegaya and Suganami, 2008; Rotton and Cohn, 2003). It is most commonly argued that high temperature is a stressor and directly affects crime by increasing levels of irritability or anger. The temperature effect, however, has also been explained in terms of the routine activities perspective; warmer temperatures are said to increase outdoor activity, exposing more people to offenders and leaving homes unprotected. Both explanations have some support. And the research as a whole suggests that crime rates are generally higher in warmer cities and regions; and during warmer seasons, months, and days. Further, the better laboratory studies find that high temperatures increase aggression. The effect of temperature on crime appears to be nonlinear, with temperature only increasing crime after it passes a certain threshold point or there are a series of very hot days.

There is also some evidence that the effect of temperature is stronger in lower-income areas, where access to air-conditioned spaces is more limited; and in rural areas, where outdoor activity is more common. And while the research has focused on violent crime, some evidence suggests that high temperatures increase certain types of property crime as well (e.g. Rotton and Cohn, 2003, 2004).

- *An increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, such as floods, hurricanes, and droughts; and an increase in associated phenomena, such as forest fires and blackouts*. These events are not only strains in and of themselves, but lead to a host of additional strains, including physical injury, the death of close others, the destruction of home and property, the loss of livelihood, the damage of critical infrastructure, and the disruption of routine activities (Norris et al., 2002). Most research has focused on sudden-onset disasters, such as hurricanes and floods; rather than slow-onset disasters, such as droughts (see excellent discussion in Zamani et al., 2006; also see Wutich and Ragsdale, 2008). Evidence suggests that disasters increase posttraumatic stress disorder, as well as negative emotions such as anger and depression (Norris et al., 2002; Wutich and Ragsdale, 2008). There is some debate over whether disasters increase crime; crime seems to decline following most disasters, but there have been cases where it increased (Brezina and Kaufman, 2008; Peek and Sutton, 2003; Robertson et al., 2010; Tierney, 2007; Tierney et al., 2006; Varano et al., 2010; Walker, 2005). Also, research suggests that violence against women and possibly children increases after disasters, something partly explained in terms of increased strain among men and parents (Curtis et al., 2000; Thornton and Voigt, 2007; Wachholz, 2007). As a result, some researchers are beginning to argue that disasters may increase crime in certain circumstances (Tierney, 2007). Crime appears more likely when disaster victims believe that the Government will be unable to meet pressing needs for food, water, and shelter; the disaster or post-disaster problems are blamed on others; there are opportunities to benefit from crime, with little risk of sanction; and there are pre-existing social divisions or resentments among those in the affected area. As climate change proceeds, disasters will increasingly come to have these features; they will become more frequent and severe, straining the ability of individuals and governments to meet basic needs and provide security; they will more often be blamed on others; and they will more often occur in contexts of social division (more below).
- *Food and fresh water shortages*. Research indicates that food and freshwater shortages are associated with negative emotions, such as frustration and anger. Shortages are also associated with feelings of inequity, since others often have better access to water/food and the shortages are frequently blamed on others—including governments (Coates et al., 2006; Collier, 2010: 207—210; Hadley and Wutich, 2009; Wutich and Ragsdale, 2008). Food and freshwater shortages are not only quite stressful in and of themselves, they also lead to a range of secondary strains, including health, work, and school problems. It is reasonable to suppose that such shortages would lead to individual crimes such as theft and aggression (against those blamed for the shortages), as well as corporate and state crimes (e.g. price gouging, forced displacement). Nevertheless, there is little research on the effect of shortages on crime. Certain anecdotal evidence suggests an effect. For example, there were riots in 30 countries when the world price for many basic foods increased by over 80 percent in the mid-2000s, causing many to go hungry (Collier, 2010: 211)….
- *Increased poverty and inequality*. As suggested above, climate change will increase poverty for a range of reasons. Higher temperatures, extreme weather events, sea-level rise, health threats, hunger/malnutrition, forced migration, and social conflict will result in the loss of or threats to livelihood and property; thereby increasing poverty at the individual, community, and societal levels. Poverty is a major stressor in itself. And it leads to a range of secondary stressors, such as family conflict and abuse, school problems, and exposure to aggressive peers and neighbors (e.g. Agnew, 2009; Currie, 1997; Smith and Ashiabi, 2007). Further, the increase in poverty will be accompanied by rising levels of inequality. As noted above, developed nations and higher-class individuals are better protected from the effects of climate change. So as climate change proceeds, the poor will suffer proportionately more—with the gap between rich and poor increasing. Further, the rich may

sometimes take advantage of the negative effects of climate change; for example, they may buy land at depressed prices and hire people at lower wages in the wake of disasters. Limited research supports these arguments, suggesting that inequality often increases after disasters such as hurricanes, heat waves and droughts (Mutter, 2010; Tierney, 2007; Zamani et al., 2006). Such inequality will exacerbate the effect of increased poverty on crime, since it will make the poverty seem both more severe and unjust. And as the criminology research indicates, poverty and inequality are among the best predictors of crime (Agnew, 2006; Pratt and Cullen, 2005; Smith and Ashiabi, 2007).

- *Forced migration*. Such migration involves the loss of home, land, close others, and often livelihood. Further, many of the migrants will settle in refugee camps and the slum areas of mega-cities in developing countries, where they are exposed to additional strains. Work and resources are scarce; living conditions are often crowded, noisy, and chaotic; and victimization is frequently high (Bartlett, 200S). Migration may not only lead to increased crime among the migrants, but also among those in the receiving areas—since the migrants will increase competition for scarce resources. Having said this, it should be noted that empirical research on the relationship between migration and crime is mixed (see Moehling and Piehl, 2009; Stowell and Martinez, 2007; Varano et al., 2010). As Stowell and Martinez (2007) argue, any effort to predict the relationship between migration and crime must consider the context in which migration occurs. Migration seems more likely to lead to crime when the migrants move involuntarily, are economically deprived, are under great stress, suffer from physical and mental health problems, lack social supports, and include a high percentage of young males. Crime also seems more likely when the receiving areas are unprepared for and hostile toward the migrants, perhaps because of pre-existing social divisions. When these conditions apply, levels of strain will be quite high and the ability and inclination to legally cope quite low. Many of those displaced by climate change will likely fit this pattern. Migration may also foster state crime and other harmful behaviors, such as closing borders to those desperate for basic necessities, military assaults on migrant groups, and—in extreme cases—genocide.
- *Exposure to armed conflict*. The social conflicts that result from climate change will create much strain for civilians. Civilians are often attacked as groups seek to expand their territory, weaken support for their opponents, obtain resources, and more generally exploit the vulnerable (Ibanez and Moya, 2010). Civilians may respond with crime in an effort to protect themselves, obtain needed resources, or seek revenge. There has not been much research on the effect of armed conflict on crime, but many of the strains associated with such conflict are among the leading causes of crime. For example, research indicates that experiencing and witnessing violence have relatively large effects on crime (Agnew, 2006).
- *Strains affecting higher-class individuals, corporations, and developed nations*. While the poor will suffer more, wealthier people and groups will experience many of the strains listed above, such as higher temperatures, sea-level rise, and extreme weather events. And while they are better able to cope with these strains, doing so will cost a great deal and involve unwelcome changes in lifestyle. The wealthy will pay more for such things as energy, consumer goods, and insurance. A host of regulations designed to reduce carbon emissions will limit how they live and do business. And others will threaten or make demands on them, partly because they contribute the most to climate change, but suffer the least. Developing nations, for example, are already insisting that developed nations do much more to curb their emissions and provide aid. As a result, security will become a central concern for the wealthy. These strains will likely increase white-collar, corporate, and state crime— as well as other harmful behaviors. Corporations, for example, may seek to suppress or evade regulations designed to reduce emissions. And developed states may employ force or the threat of force to obtain resources such as water, food, and fuel.

The magnitude of strain. The strains associated with climate change are generally quite conducive to crime (see Agnew, 2006). They are high in magnitude. They threaten life, health, livelihood, and home. They will become

increasingly common and more severe. Further, these strains will more often occur together, amplifying their magnitude. Such strains generate strong negative emotions, tax the ability to cope in a legal manner, and more readily prompt justifications and excuses for crime.

The injustice of the strain. Strains are also more likely to lead to crime when they are seen as unjust. Unjust strains are more likely to generate negative emotions such as anger, as well as provide justifications and excuses for crime (e.g. the crime will help right a wrong). Many of the strains associated with climate change, such as extreme weather events, are now often viewed as chance events or 'acts of God'. These strains, however, will become more likely to be seen as unjust as climate change proceeds. They will more often be attributed to intentional human acts as knowledge about climate change spreads and anomalies in the climate become more apparent. And such intentional acts will often be seen as unjust, particularly by those in developing nations and the poor, who have done little to contribute to climate change, but will suffer its worst effects….

Strain associated with low control. Strains associated with low social control are also more likely to lead to crime, since those low in control have less to lose through crime. The strains associated with climate change are noteworthy in that they will undermine all major forms of control. For example, these strains will reduce individuals' investment in conventional society, since they sometimes result in the loss of livelihood, home, property, and future prospects for success. Further, there is reason to believe that they will reduce direct control, weaken attachments to conventional others, undermine moral beliefs, and lower self-control (see later).

Strain conducive to criminal coping. Finally, strains are more likely to lead to crime when they are easily resolved through crime. While crime will not reduce climate change, it may sometimes be a viable adaptation to many of the strains associated with such change. Crime may allow individuals and groups to obtain those resources that are in short supply, particularly food, water, shelter, fuel, and land. It may provide money, which aids in the adaptation to and recovery from climate change. It is a vehicle for obtaining revenge against those believed responsible for climate change and related targets. It allows corporations and the wealthy to maintain their privileged position (e.g. evading environmental regulations, appropriating the resources of others). And it is a way to alleviate the negative emotions associated with such strains (through illicit drug use).

Conditioning variables. There are of course many ways to cope with the effects of climate change, both legal and criminal. In fact, a central theme in the climate change literature is that we should start employing a range of legal coping strategies. For example, individuals should relocate to areas less exposed to severe storms and flooding, and governments should promote the use of genetically engineered crops that are better able to withstand heat and drought. Many individuals and groups, however, are unable or unwilling to employ such strategies, and so are more likely to cope through crime. Among other things, criminal coping should be more likely among those who lack conventional coping skills and resources, such as money; are low in conventional social supports; are low in social control; are in situations where the benefits of crime are high and the costs are low; and are disposed to crime (Agnew, 2006). As described below, one of the more disturbing features of climate change is that it will not only dramatically increase exposure to strains, but will also increase those factors that foster criminal coping—such as low social control.

Lower Social Control and Increased Social Disorganization

Climate change will lower social control at individual, community, and societal levels. I discuss two major types of control immediately below, direct control and stake in conformity, and consider beliefs regarding crime and self-control further below.

Direct control: The family. Direct control involves stating clear rules that forbid crime, monitoring behavior, and consistently sanctioning crime in a meaningful, but not overly harsh manner (Agnew, 2009). Climate change will reduce direct control exercised by family members. Climate change will disrupt families, as some family members die, become ill, or migrate. Further, the increased poverty and strain associated with climate change will have a negative impact on parenting practices. Much data, in particular, indicate that poverty and other stressors reduce the likelihood that parents will effectively supervise their children (Agnew, 2005, 2006, 2009; Patterson et al., 1992).

Direct control: The community. Climate change will also reduce the direct control exercised by community residents. As noted above, one effect of climate change will be the migration of people to refugee camps and the slums of mega-cities. Direct control is often weak in such areas, and will be furthered weakened by the arrival of large numbers of migrants. In particular, high rates of poverty, residential mobility, family disruption, and (often) heterogeneity reduce the ability and willingness of residents to exercise control over one another (Agnew, 2009; Kubrin et al., 2009).

Direct control: The state. Finally, climate change will undermine direct control by the State. Events such as hurricanes, flooding, and blackouts temporarily reduce the ability of the State to exercise direct control. Efforts to mitigate, adapt to, and repair the harm caused by climate change will consume state resources; reducing the ability of many states to devote adequate resources to their criminal justice systems. Further, the legitimacy of many states will be compromised by their inability to effectively respond to the strains created by climate change. As a consequence, people may become less willing to cooperate with such states in their efforts to exercise direct control (see LaFree, 1998). Individuals, for example, may become less likely to report crimes to the police.

However, it is important to note the possibility of a countervailing trend. As the negative effects of climate change become more apparent, states may attempt to exercise more direct control over those legal activities that contribute to high carbon levels in the atmosphere, particularly deforestation and the use or inefficient use of fossil fuels. For example, there may be efforts to more closely regulate forestry practices and coal-fired power plants. Efforts in these areas may create new categories of crime or civil law violation, thus contributing to more *illegal* behavior. But at the same time, these efforts at direct control may reduce the extent of those currently legal acts that contribute to climate change. These efforts at direct control are perhaps more likely in developed states. The ability of developing states to exercise such control may be seriously compromised for the reasons just indicated. Also, developing states may be more subject to influence by transnational corporations, including bribery and coercion. Further, such states may be less inclined to limit carbon emissions out of fear that doing so will limit their economic development.

Stake in conformity. Stake in conformity refers to those things that individuals and groups might jeopardize through crime. They include one's income; possessions; investment in conventional institutions such as school, work, and government; and emotional ties to conventional others. As suggested above, climate change will threaten these things. Massive numbers of people will lose their livelihoods, homes and possessions; be forced to leave school; have their families disrupted; have their faith in government shaken; and lose their hope for the future. As a consequence, they may come to believe that they have little to lose by engaging in crime.

Lower Levels of Conventional Social Support

Conventional social supports range from the emotional support provided by close others to social welfare programs run by the State. Research indicates that such supports often reduce crime, particularly among those experiencing strains such as poverty (Cullen, 1994; Pratt and Cullen, 2005; Pratt and Godsey, 2002). The disaster research suggests that there is frequently an increase in supportive behavior following natural disasters. But as climate change proceeds, its effects will become more widespread, frequent, and severe. And it may eventually lead to a significant

reduction in levels of support. The immediate supports available to individuals may decline as close others are killed, injured, forced to migrate, and/or placed under great stress. Private insurance will become too costly for many or unavailable. And community- and state-level supports will decline. Many individuals will migrate from rural areas to the slums of mega-cities, where informal social support is less common (and state-run social welfare programs are scarce). And governments will become less able to provide support as their resources are stretched in an effort to respond to extreme weather events and the other effects of climate change. In brief, conventional social support may decline as the need for it increases.

Beliefs and Values Favorable to Crime

As indicated above, climate change may lead large numbers of individuals to experience severe strains, blame these strains on others, and find that they cannot count on the State for relief. As subcultural theorists suggest, such conditions are conducive to the development of beliefs and values favorable to crime (Agnew and Kaufman, 2010). The commitment of individuals to those legal norms promoted by the State will decline (see LaFree, 1998). This will be especially likely in those cases where states are unable to meet the basic needs of individuals, including food, shelter, and security; are blamed for climate change and its effects; and discriminate when responding to the strains created by climate change.

Further, the above conditions will promote a range of justifications and excuses for crime. Individuals and groups will feel they must engage in crime if they are to survive and protect close others; that crime is excusable given the harmful acts committed by others, including states; and that others deserve harm given their role in creating the above strains. Related to this, the strain and conflict engendered by climate change will increase the salience of in-groups, with those in out-groups being viewed as threats—a belief also conducive to crime (see Maier-Katkin et al., 2009).

Individual Traits Conducive to Crime

Several individual traits are conducive to crime, including low intelligence, low constraint, negative emotionality, low self-control (similar to low constraint and negative emotionality), and certain types of mental disorder (Agnew, 2005, 2009; Silver et al., 2008). Evidence suggests that these traits are influenced by biological factors, including birth complications, malnutrition, exposure to toxic substances, and head injuries. Such traits are also influenced by the environment, including poor parental bonding and supervision, low levels of stimulation, stressful experiences, and/or poverty (see Agnew, 2005, 2006, 2009; American Dietetic Association, 2003; Bartlett, 2008; Bohannon, 2009; Collier, 2010; Prevention Action, 2010; Scarpa and Raine, 2007; Smith and Ashiabi, 2007). Climate change will increase the prevalence and severity of these traits through its effect on these biological harms and environmental problems. As noted above, for example, climate change will dramatically increase levels of malnutrition, stress, poor parenting, and poverty.

Opportunities for Crime

Climate change will also affect the opportunities for crime. As the routine activities perspective points out, crime is most likely when motivated offenders encounter attractive targets in the absence of capable guardians (Felson, 2002). The likelihood that this will happen depends on the nature of everyday or routine activities. Climate change will not only affect the supply of motivated offenders, as described above, but also the likelihood that such offenders

encounter attractive targets in the absence of capable guardians. In particular, warmer weather will alter routine activities, such that more people are in public places—increasing the likelihood that motivated offenders will encounter victims and leaving more homes unprotected. The research on temperature and crime provides some support for this argument (e.g. Rotton and Cohn, 2003). In addition, extreme weather events and blackouts may reduce guardianship, particularly by the police. As noted above, crime *sometimes* increases after disasters, and the same is true of *certain* blackouts, such as the 2003 blackout in New York City.

At the same time, other aspects of climate change may reduce opportunities for crime. Increases in poverty may reduce the supply of attractive targets. Also, the loss of livelihood may lead people to spend more time at home, increasing guardianship. Further, economic decline and damage to infrastructure may make it more difficult for individuals and groups to engage in many of the currently legal acts that contribute to climate change, such as air and automobile travel, excessive consumption, and the heating and cooling of large homes and businesses. As an illustration, carbon emissions in Russia and many of the other former Soviet bloc countries decreased by 30–50 percent from 1990 to 2007 due to economic decline (Henson, 2011: 314–315). Predictions in this area, however, are uncertain. For example, some individuals, groups, and states may respond to economic hardship by engaging in acts that increase carbon emissions, such as the burning of low-grade coal and the raiding of forests for fuel.

Given these countervailing trends, it is difficult to predict whether climate change will lead to an *overall* increase in opportunities for crime/harmful acts. I am inclined to think that it will, however. For example, even though increasing poverty may reduce the supply of *certain* attractive targets for crime, it may alter views about what constitutes an attractive target. For example, the attractiveness of items such as food and freshwater may increase, sometimes dramatically, offsetting the decline in other attractive targets.

Increased Social Conflict

Finally, climate change will increase crime and other harmful acts through its effect on social conflict. As discussed above, climate change will contribute to conflict through several mechanisms—with perhaps the most important being increased competition between groups over scarce resources. Such conflict will increase crime and harmful acts in a variety of ways, all described by conflict or critical criminologists (e.g. Currie, 1997; Lynch and Michalowski, 2006; Maier-Katkin et al., 2009). More powerful groups will criminalize behaviors that they view as threatening, including certain of the survival behaviors of those in less powerful groups (e.g. migration). Powerful groups will attempt to ensure that the harmful behaviors in which they engage are not criminalized or, barring that, that the laws against such behaviors are not strictly enforced (see White, 2010b). In fact, corporate and other groups are now actively engaged in a campaign to raise doubts about climate change and to fight legislation that would limit such change (e.g. Henson, 2011; Lynch et al., 2010; McCright and Dunlap, 2010). Powerful groups will engage in a range of criminal or otherwise harmful acts as they seek to maintain their privileged position (e.g. the violation of environmental protection laws, the forceful appropriation of resources, genocide). The members of less powerful groups will engage in crime as they try to maintain their social position or simply survive, seek revenge against those seen as the source of their problems, or fall victim to the many deprivations they face (e.g. mental illness in response to increased stress). And the members of all groups will engage in crime as they come to develop a highly self-interested orientation, prompted in part by the intense competition over scarce resources.

A Model of Climate Change and Crime

The above arguments are depicted in Figure 48.1. As indicated, climate change has multiple dimensions and effects, each of which may increase crime through a range of mechanisms. In particular, there is good reason to believe that each element of climate change will increase strain, reduce social control, weaken conventional social supports, foster beliefs and values favorable to crime, lead to individual traits conducive to crime, increase certain opportunities for crime, and/or increase social conflict. These varied effects substantially increase the likelihood of crime, since each element of climate change has multiple additive effects on crime. Further, these effects are likely to interact with one another (see Agnew, 2005, 2006). For example, the strains that result from extreme weather events are more likely to cause crime because such events also reduce control, weaken social support, and foster beliefs favorable to crime....

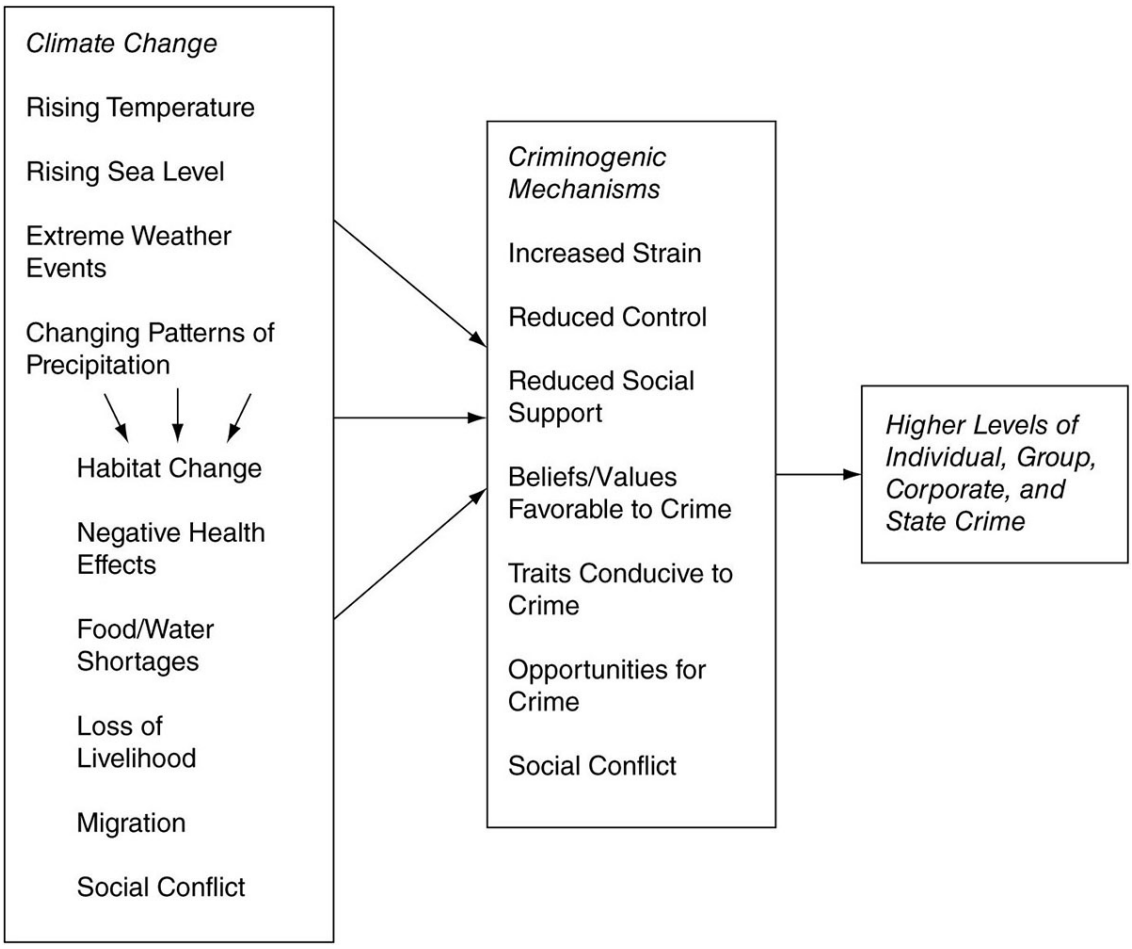


FIGURE 48.1 The Impact of Climate Change on Crime

The central thrust of this article is that climate change may not only lead to negative environmental, health, and economic effects, but possibly to a breakdown in social order as well. That is, climate change may move us toward a Hobbesian state of nature, with individuals and groups struggling to survive in an increasingly brutal and unregulated environment. This proposition—if supported—would provide a very powerful incentive to act. And as numerous sources make clear, we now have a reasonably good idea of what needs to be done to mitigate and adapt to

climate change (e.g. Henson, 2011; Hertsgaard, 2011; Peake and Smith, 2009; http://www.pewclimate.org/). We also have the resources to act, although action will involve some cost and a significant change in lifestyle. But at the same time, acting now will have numerous benefits, including the creation of economic opportunities for many; a reduction in inequality across nations, assuming that efforts are made to help impoverished nations develop in a sustainable manner; improved physical and mental health; and, as suggested above, a range of social benefits, including lower levels of crime.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Climate change involves several related phenomena. What are they? What are the major effects of climate change? Drawing on the most recent data, do we need to revise any of Agnew's statements about the extent and timing of climate change and its effects?
2. What types of countries and groups suffer the most from climate change?
3. Climate change may increase several types of strain. What are they? Are the strains associated with climate change conducive to crime? If so, why? How does climate change affect the ability to cope with these strains in a legal manner?
4. In addition to strain theory, what other theories of crime does Agnew draw on when arguing that climate change will increase crime? For any two of these theories, what key arguments does Agnew make?
5. Drawing on Agnew, do you think that certain causes of crime (e.g., strains) affect other causes (e.g., individual traits)? Give three examples of such effects.
6. Agnew argues that climate change will not only increase individual crimes, but also certain corporate and state crimes. Why?
7. How might the effects of climate change described by Agnew affect our ability to reduce and adapt to climate change?

PART XV

POSITIVE CRIMINOLOGY

Francis T. Cullen
University of Cincinnati

Robert Agnew
Emory University

Pamela Wilcox
Pennsylvania State University

Most theories attribute crime to what are commonly viewed as negative traits and social experiences. For example, crime is said to be caused by traits such as low self-control and negative emotionality, as well as by social experiences such as child abuse, weak bonds to family, and association with criminals. Further, it is argued that the best way to control crime is to manage these traits and experiences and to exercise greater control over the offenders with them. By contrast, positive criminology proposes that we should devote greater attention to the role that positive traits and social experiences play in the explanation and control of crime (for overviews, see Chouhy, 2019; Ronel, 2015; Ronel and Elisha, 2011; Ronel and Segev, 2014, 2015).

As an aside, "positive" criminology, which is a contemporary perspective, should not be confused with the positive school of criminology founded by Lombroso and others. As discussed in Part I, this earlier approach heralded the use of scientific or "positive" methods to study criminals.

Positive criminologists do not deny the importance of negative traits and experiences, but they claim that crime is not simply a function of such traits and experiences. Crime is also influenced by positive traits such as empathy, altruism, optimism, self-efficacy, prosocial identities such as parent and worker, and positive affect (the tendency to experience emotions such as happiness). Likewise, crime is influenced by positive social experiences, especially involvement in relationships characterized by acceptance, trust, security, support, and justice. It is argued that individuals with such traits and experiences are better able to avoid those negative factors that cause crime, are better able to cope with negative experiences, and generally feel less need or desire to engage in crime. In fact, such individuals often feel an aversion to crime and an attraction to prosocial behavior.

Further, positive criminologists argue that efforts to control crime should not simply focus on reducing negative traits and experiences or controlling offenders, especially through imprisonment (Ronel and Segev, 2014, 2015). An effort should also be made to cultivate positive traits and experiences. Positive criminologists, for example, endorse the restorative justice approach, which tries to foster empathy in offenders and restore their ties to prosocial others (see Braithwaite, 2002). They also favor treatment approaches, such as the Good Lives model, that seek to build on offenders' strengths rather than simply try to fix their deficits (see Ward and Maruna, 2007; also see Kewley, 2017; Wilson and Bastida, 2017). Further, the harsh punishment and isolation of offenders should be avoided. These responses undermine positive traits and experiences; instead, they create feelings of anger and rejection, disrupt ties

to prosocial others, and lead to association with other offenders. As such, they may increase crime (Cullen et al., 2011).

In brief, positive criminologists argue that we should focus on the positive as well as the negative. Positive criminology is not a distinct theory of crime, however. Rather, it is a general approach that encompasses several theories and crime control strategies (Ronel and Elisha, 2011; Ronel and Segev, 2015). Certain of the theories that fall under the umbrella of positive criminology have already been discussed. This includes Braithwaite's theory of reintegrative shaming (Chapter 19). Crime is said to be less likely in communitarian societies, where individuals are involved in interdependent relationships characterized by trust and mutual assistance. And crime is best controlled not by rejecting offenders but through reintegrative shaming—which fosters traits such as empathy and builds positive ties with prosocial others. Certain aspects of life-course criminology also fall under positive criminology. Researchers have found that offenders are more likely to desist from crime when they possess certain positive traits, including hope, self-efficacy, and a positive identity. Desistance is also more likely when offenders develop positive ties to prosocial others (see Part XIII in this volume; Giordano et al., 2002; Maruna, 2001; Ronel and Elisha, 2011; Ronel and Segev, 2014).

Still other work in criminology exemplifies the positive approach. Prominent here are recent attempts to explain long-term trends in crime. In an analysis of homicide trends over the last several hundred years, Roth (2012, 2013) presents data suggesting that declines in homicide are due not to increases in self-control but rather to successful nation building. Homicide is lower when citizens view the state and social system as legitimate, trust the government, and feel close to and empathetic with their fellow citizens. And Pinker's (2011) seminal book *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* attempts to explain a general decline in violence over the centuries by arguing that a series of social changes have fostered traits such as empathy and a moral sense.

Two Theories Illustrating Positive Criminology

Certain of the theories that fall under positive criminology focus on the positive social experiences that reduce crime. Cullen's (1994) theory of social support and crime, presented in Chapter 49, is an example. Other theories focus on the positive traits that reduce crime. Agnew's (2014) theory of social concern and crime, presented in Chapter 50, is an example. But most positive theories, including those by Cullen and Agnew, recognize that positive traits and social experiences mutually influence one another (see Chouhy, 2019). Positive traits arise in part from positive social experiences. So, for example, Agnew argues that the types of social support described by Cullen are a major source of those traits that comprise social concern. And positive traits contribute to positive social experiences. Individuals who are concerned about the welfare of others, for example, are more likely to provide support to them.

Social Support Theory

Cullen (1994) drew his theory from a broader theory of social support in the social sciences (Vaux, 1988). This perspective was particularly influential in the sociology of mental illness, where it was argued that social support buffered the impact of stress on outcomes such as depression (see Thoits, 2011). Cullen recognized that as a general theory of human behavior, social support theory might well apply to criminal conduct. One obvious overlap was with strain theories that examined how people coped with the "stress" in their lives (Cullen and Wright, 1997). But his approach was also a reaction to other perspectives, such as Hirschi's (1969) social bond theory, that seemed to ignore the good in social life. Thus, whereas Hirschi focused on the role of parents in building bonds that exerted indirect

control over their children, Cullen wondered how the most fundamental aspect of parenting—hugs, kisses, and loving one's child—could be ignored. As a result, he was attracted to the concept of social support because it seemed to fill this void in the criminological enterprise. As Vaux (1988: 1) noted at that time, "Social support has to do with everyday things—sharing tasks and feelings, exchanging information and attention—as well as dramatic but common human experiences—the joy of love, the pain of isolation, family ties, and bonds of friendship."

Cullen also was writing in the midst of the mean season in corrections in the United States. As a long–time advocate of rehabilitation (Cullen, 2013), he believed that punitive policies that stigmatized and excluded offenders, most dramatically seen in mass imprisonment, were counterproductive. He favored instead reforms that emphasized social support such as correctional treatment programs and early intervention programs (Cullen et al., 1999).

Cullen's central thesis is that the level of crime is inversely related to the level of social support. This is true in the lives of individuals and in the experiences of communities and nations. The presence of quality social support is seen to be a good thing. A growing body of empirical research now supports this thesis, showing that social support reduces crime at the micro level and macro level (for reviews, see Chouhy, 2019; Makarios and Sams, 2013; Pratt and Cullen, 2005). The effects are not always large, but they appear to be relatively consistent. It may be that social support is not a single powerful factor that is the most dominant source behind whether someone becomes a criminal. In all likelihood, receiving social support is one facet of our social relationships and thus affects our lives in small but diverse ways from infancy to adulthood.

One challenge is to demonstrate precisely how social support is implicated in the reduction of crime. With Robert Lilly and Richard Ball, Cullen has outlined five ways that social support might increase prosocial and decrease antisocial influences for individuals (Lilly et al., 2019: 133–134; also see Chouhy, 2019; Chouhy et al., 2020). First, social support fosters healthy social development among infants and children. This might involve assistance for at-risk mothers during pregnancy and parents using supportive rather than harsh management strategies with their youngsters. Second, social support is a source of social bonds to parents and others. Attachment is a product of receiving love and assistance with problems, whether from parents during childhood or a spouse in adulthood. Third, the delivery of social support would model prosocial learning, acting as a conduit for positive differential association. Fourth, social support insulates against strain caused by negative life experiences, making noncriminal coping possible. Fifth, social support may help offenders deal with the stigmatizing effects of an arrest and help prisoners reentering society after years behind bars (see, e.g., Dong and Krohn, 2017). Cullen and colleagues add that at the macro-level, supportive communities and nations focus on fulfilling human needs rather than consigning "individuals to deal with personal and social troubles on their own" (Lilly et al., 2019: 134). They are characterized by "government welfare policies, cultural values, and community integration that help to diminish the effects of the root causes of crime" (p. 134; see also Braithwaite, 1989; Currie, 1998, 2020).

Social Concern Theory

Agnew (2014) begins his theory of social concern and crime by arguing that criminologists focus on the negative traits of individuals. In particular, it is frequently assumed that individuals are by nature self-interested. They have little concern for others and are instead "focused on the satisfaction of their needs and desires." And, unless subject to proper control, they will satisfy their needs and desires through crime when it is expedient to do so. Perhaps most prominently, Hirschi's (1969; Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990) control theories, for example, are based on this assumption (see Part V). Agnew argues, however, that this view of human nature is overly simplistic. Drawing on research from a variety of fields, he claims that while people are self-interested to some degree, they are also socially concerned.

Social concern refers to "a set of inclinations that sometimes lead people to give more consideration to others than to their own interests" (Agnew, 2014: 5). Individuals high in social concern care about the welfare of others, in large part because of their empathy with and sympathy for them; they desire close ties to others; they follow certain moral intuitions, such as the inclination to avoid harming innocent others; and they are inclined to conform to the behavior and views of others. These inclinations are in part "natural," meaning they have a strong biological basis and are widely shared. And they are also influenced by the social environment. They are learned from others, are fostered by strong bonds to prosocial others, and are more common among those who have experienced *moderate* levels of strain. So Agnew contends that human nature is complex; individuals are self-interested, socially concerned, *and* malleable—being influenced by the larger social environment.

Agnew then discusses the relationship between social concern and crime. The major proposition of his theory is that those higher in social concern should be lower in crime, since crime runs counter to those inclinations that comprise social concern. Agnew also states that social concern affects crime in other ways. For example, social concern has an indirect effect on crime through its effect on strain, control, and the social learning of crime. Those higher in concern should be lower in strain, higher in control, and less likely to associate with criminal others. Finally, Agnew argues that the effect of social concern is stronger in some circumstances than others. For example, we are more likely to show social concern to those seen as ingroup versus outgroup members.

So Agnew's theory of social concern and crime highlights several positive traits that generally reduce the likelihood of crime. It is important to note that Agnew was not the first to identify such traits. Many of the traits that comprise social concern have been discussed by other criminologists. Agnew's theory of social concern and crime draws heavily on their work, as well as work in related areas, to present the most systematic theory regarding positive traits and crime. As noted by Agnew in Chapter 50, data suggest that many of the traits that comprise social concern are related to crime (also see Agnew, 2011; Chouhy et al., 2016; Chouhy et al., 2017; Craig, 2017; TenEyck and Barnes, 2019). Also, certain of the other predictions of social concern theory have received support. For example, females are lower in crime partly because they are higher in social concern (TenEyck and Barnes, 2019). Many of the specific propositions in Agnew's theory, however, are still in need of empirical testing. Agnew notes that his theory, if supported, has important implications for reducing crime. Even though the traits that comprise social concern have some biological basis, they are also influenced by the social environment and there is good reason to believe that they can be deliberately cultivated.

References

Agnew, Robert. 2014. “Social Concern and Crime: Moving Beyond the Assumption of Simple Self-Interest.” *Criminology* **52**: 1–32.

Agnew, Robert. 2011. *Toward a Unified Criminology: Integrating Assumptions About Crime, People, and Society*. New York: New York University Press.

Braithwaite, John. 1989. *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

____. 2002. *Restorative Justice and Responsive Regulation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Chouhy, Cecilia. 2019. “Social Support and Crime.” In Marvin D. Krohn, Nicole Hendrix, Gina Penly Hall, and Alan J. Lizotte (eds.), *Handbook on Crime and Deviance*, pp. 213–241. New York: Springer.

Chouhy, Cecilia, Robert Agnew, and Francis T. Cullen. 2016. “Social Concern and Crime.” *Oxford Handbooks Online* May: 1–35. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935383.013.135

Chouhy, Cecilia, Francis T. Cullen, and Heejin Lee. 2020. “A Social Support Theory of Desistance.” *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology* **6**: 204–223.

Chouhy, Cecilia, Spencer T. Hochstetler, and Francis T. Cullen. 2017. “Social Concern and Delinquency: An Empirical Assessment of a Novel Theory.” *Deviant Behavior* **38**: 94–117.

Craig, Jessica M. 2017. “The Effects of Social Concern on White-Collar Offending.” *Deviant Behavior* **38**: 837–854.

Cullen, Francis T. 1994. “Social Support as an Organizing Concept for Criminology: Presidential Address to the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences.” *Justice Quarterly* **11**: 527–559.

____. 2013. “Rehabilitation: Beyond Nothing Works.” In Michael Tonry (ed.), *Crime and Justice in America, 1975 to 2025—Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, Volume **42**, pp. 299–376. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Cullen, Francis T., Cheryl Lero Jonson, and Daniel S. Nagin. 2011. “Prisons Do Not Reduce Recidivism: The High Cost of Ignoring Science.” *The Prison Journal* **91**: 48S–65S.

Cullen, Francis T. and John Paul Wright. 1997. “Liberating the Anomie-Strain Paradigm: Implications from Social Support Theory.” In Nikos Passas and Robert Agnew (eds.), *The Future of Anomie Theory*, pp. 187–206. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Cullen, Francis T., John Paul Wright, and Mitchell B. Chamlin. 1999. “Social Support and Social Reform: A Progressive Crime Control Agenda.” *Crime and Delinquency* **45**: 188–207.

Currie, Elliott. 1998. *Crime and Punishment in America*. New York: Metropolitan Books.

____. 2020. *A Peculiar Indifference: The Neglected Toll of Violence on Black America*. New York: Metropolitan Books.

Dong, Robert and Marvin D. Krohn. 2017. “The Protective Effects of Family Support on the Relationship Between Official Intervention and General Delinquency Across the Life Course.” *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology* **3**: 39–61.

Giordano, Peggy C., Stephen A. Cernkovich, and Jennifer Rudolph. 2002. “Gender, Crime, and Desistance: Toward a Theory of Cognitive Transformation.” *American Journal of Sociology* **107**: 990–1064.

Gottfredson, Michael R. and Travis Hirschi. 1990. *A General Theory of Crime*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Hirschi, Travis. 1969. *Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kewley, Stephanie. 2017. “Strength Based Approaches and Protective Factors from a Criminological Perspective.” *Aggression and Violent Behavior* **32**: 11–18.

Lilly, J. Robert, Francis T. Cullen, and Richard A. Ball. 2019. *Criminological Theory: Context and Consequences*, 7th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Makarios, Matthew D. and Tara L. Sams. 2013. “Social Support and Crime.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 160–185. New York: Oxford University Press.

Maruna, Shadd. 2001. *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Pinker, Steven. 2011. *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*. New York: Viking.

Pratt, Travis C. and Francis T. Cullen. 2005. “Assessing Macro-Level Predictors and Theories of Crime: A Meta-Analysis.” In Michael Tonry (ed.), *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, Volume **32**, pp. 373–450. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ronel, Natti. 2015. “How Can Criminology (and Victimology) Become Positive?” In Natti Ronel and Dana Segev (eds.), *Positive Criminology*, pp. 13–31. New York: Routledge.

Ronel, Natti and Ety Elisha. 2011. “A Different Perspective: Introducing Positive Criminology.” *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* **55**: 305–325.

Ronel, Natti and Dana Segev. 2014. “Positive Criminology in Practice.” *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* **58**: 1389–1407.

____. eds. 2015. *Positive Criminology*. New York: Routledge.

Roth, Randolph. 2012. ““Measuring Feelings and Beliefs that May Facilitate (or Deter) Homicide.” *Homicide Studies* **16**: 197–216.

____. 2013. “The Importance of Testing Criminological Theories in Historical Context: The Civilization Thesis Versus the Nation-Building Hypothesis.” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Atlanta, GA.

TenEyck, Michael and J. C. Barnes. 2019. “A Preliminary Test of the Association between Agnew’s Social Concern and Criminal Behavior: Results from a Nationally Representative Sample of Adults.” *Deviant Behavior* **40**: 187–204.

Thoits, Peggy A. 2011. “Mechanisms Linking Social Ties and Support to Physical and Mental Health.” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* **52**: 145–161.

Vaux, Alan. 1988. *Social Support: Theory, Research, and Intervention*. New York: Praeger.

Ward, Tony and Shadd Maruna. 2007. *Rehabilitation: Beyond the Risk Paradigm*. London: Palgrave.

Wilson, Christina R. and Elena P. Bastida. 2017. “Positive Criminology: A Catalyst for Change.” *Corrections Today* May/June: 34–40.

49.
Social Support and Crime*

Francis T. Cullen

Criminologists have been insightful in showing how bad things that individuals experience—such as living in a disorganized neighborhood, the stress imposed by blocked opportunities, and frayed social bonds—can increase wayward conduct. Cullen (1994) argues, however, that scholars' exclusive focus on the criminogenic impact of what is bad in people's lives blinds them to the protective impact of what is good in people's lives. In particular, he contends that social support—that is, the extent to which others provide a person with instrumental assistance (e.g., money, help getting a job) and emotional assistance (e.g., empathy in a crisis, parental love)—is an essential component of human relations. His overarching claim is that crime is inversely related to social support.

Cullen (1994) elaborates that thesis by presenting a set of propositions regarding social support. Among other things, he argues that social support has a direct effect on crime; that it influences other variables that affect crime, such as the level of social control; that it conditions the impact of certain variables on crime (e.g., strain is more likely to lead to crime when social support is low); and that it plays a critical role in the prevention of crime and the rehabilitation of offenders. Cullen applies the concept of social support to both micro-level and macro-level questions (e.g., why the United States has such a high crime rate) and also uses it to shed light on developmental issues (e.g., the desistance from crime in early adulthood; see also Chouhy et al., 2020).

The concept of social support represents an important addition to criminology. Even though numerous theories make implicit or explicit reference to social support, Cullen draws explicit attention to the central role this concept may play in crime (see also Drennon-Gala, 1995). In doing so, he introduces a new variable into mainstream criminology. Support is related to, but distinct from, concepts such as social control and social disorganization. Second, the concept of social support moves us toward a rather different approach to reducing crime. Current policies focus largely on the control *of crime, often through very punitive policies. Cullen's theory of social support, however, suggests a more humanitarian approach (Cullen et al., 1999).*

Cullen's theory is compatible with existing research on crime (as described in his article; see also Cullen and Wright, 1997). A growing number of empirical tests also provide evidence in favor of the theory (for overviews, see Chouhy, 2019; Makarios and Sams, 2013). For example, in one study based on a sample of 1,775 adolescents and their parents interviewed for the National Survey of Families and Households, Wright (1995) found that structural factors, such as poverty and broken homes, increase delinquency mainly by diminishing the amount of support that parents are able to supply their children. In another study based on the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, Wright and Cullen (2001) reported that social support reduces delinquent involvement both directly and in combination with parental control (i.e., when parents both support and control their children). A more recent example is found in the research of Dong and Krohn (2017). Using the Rochester Youth Development Study, they found that perceived family support reduced offending in both adolescence (ages 14–18) and young adulthood (ages 21–31). Their analysis also revealed that during the adult period, family support buffered the effect of labeling—the official intervention of police arrest—on criminal involvement.

References

Chouhy, Cecilia. 2019. “Social Support and Crime.” In Marvin D. Krohn, Nicole Hendrix, Gina Penly Hall, and Alan J. Lizotte (eds.), *Handbook on Crime and Deviance*, pp. 213–241. New York: Springer.

Chouhy, Cecilia, Francis T. Cullen, and Heejin Lee. 2020. “A Social Support Theory of Desistance.” *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology* **6**: 204–223.

Cullen, Francis T. 1994. “Social Support as an Organizing Concept for Criminology: Presidential Address to the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences.” *Justice Quarterly* **11**: 527–559.

Cullen, Francis T. and John Paul Wright. 1997. “Liberating the Anomie-Strain Paradigm: Implications from Social-Support Theory.” In Nikos Passas and Robert Agnew (eds.), *The Future of Anomie Theory*, pp. 187–206. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Cullen, Francis T., John Paul Wright, and Mitchell B. Chamlin. 1999. “Social Support and Social Reform: A Progressive Crime Control Agenda.” *Crime and Delinquency* **45**: 188–207.

Dong, Robert and Marvin D. Krohn. 2017. “The Protective Effects of Family Support on the Relationship Between Official Intervention and General Delinquency Across the Life Course.” *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology* **3**: 39–61.

Drennon-Gala, Don. 1995. *Delinquency and High School Dropouts: Reconsidering Social Correlates*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Makarios, Matthew D. and Tara L. Sams. 2013. “Social Support and Crime.” In Francis T. Cullen and Pamela Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*, pp. 160–185. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wright, John Paul. 1995. *Parental Support and Juvenile Delinquency: A Test of Social Support Theory*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cincinnati.

Wright, John Paul and Francis T. Cullen. 2001. “Parental Efficacy and Delinquent Behavior: Do Control and Support Matter?” *Criminology* **39**: 601–629.

My intention is to argue that notions of social support appear in diverse criminological writings….

What is lacking, however, is an attempt to integrate these diverse insights on social support into a coherent criminological paradigm. In the sociology of mental illness, for example, considerable progress has been made in this direction (Lin, Dean, and Ensel 1986; Vaux 1988). But in criminology the insights linking social support to crime remain disparate, and are not systematized so far as to direct theoretical and empirical investigation. Indeed, I can offer one (nonetheless significant) indicator of the latency of this concept: virtually no introductory or theoretical textbook lists “social support” in its index….

My goal, then, is to argue that social support, if approached systematically, can be an important organizing concept for criminology. In the pages ahead, I will discuss propositions that might form the parameters, in a preliminary way, for a criminological paradigm, which draws on existing knowledge to illuminate new research vistas.

---

* Reprinted from Francis T. Cullen, “Social Support as an Organizing Concept for Criminology: Presidential Address to the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences” in *Justice Quarterly* 11(4). Copyright © 1994 by the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences. Reprinted by permission of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences.

What Is Social Support?

... Lin (1986: 18) defines social support as "the perceived or actual instrumental and/or expressive provisions supplied by the community, social networks, and confiding partners." Dissection of this definition reveals three major dimensions of support. The first is the distinction between the objective delivery and the perception of support. Taking perceptions into account is important because it leads to the insight that people do not receive support in a mechanical way but interpret, appraise, and anticipate it in the context of social situations (see Matsueda 1992).

Second, although different typologies exist, social support is usually divided into two broad rubrics: instrumental and expressive. According to Lin (1986: 20), "the instrumental dimension involves the use of the relationship as a means to a goal, such as seeking a job, getting a loan, or finding someone to babysit." Vaux (1988: 21) suggests that "instrumental functions may be served through the provision of goods or money (material aid or financial assistance) and through providing information, making suggestions, and clarifying issues (advice and guidance)."

The expressive dimension, again according to Lin (1986: 20), "involves the use of the relationship as an end as well as a means. It is the activity of sharing sentiments, ventilating frustrations, reaching an understanding on issues and problems, and affirming one's own as well as the other's worth and dignity." Vaux (1988: 21) notes that the "affective functions" of support "include meeting the needs for love and affection, esteem and identity, and belonging and companionship. These needs are met respectively through emotional support, feedback and social reinforcement, and socializing."

Third, Lin's definition indicates that support occurs on different social levels. Micro-level support can be delivered by a confiding individual, such as a spouse or a best friend. But social support also can be viewed as a property of social networks and of communities and larger ecological units in which individuals are enmeshed.

A fourth dimension, not discussed by Lin, must be added: whether the support is delivered by a formal agency or through informal relations (Vaux 1988). Informal social support would occur through social relationships with others who lack any official status relative to the individual. Formal social support might be provided by schools, governmental assistance programs, and—perhaps most interesting to us—the criminal justice system.

The Ecology of Social Support

In the past decade, scholars have shown a renewed interest in studying the social ecology of crime, as did Shaw and McKay (1942) (Bursik and Grasmick 1993a; Byrne and Sampson 1986; Reiss and Tonry 1986). This research has shown that crime rates vary across nations and, within a single nation, across communities. It is noteworthy, if unsurprising, that the United States has higher rates of serious crime, especially violent offenses, than other Western industrialized nations (Adler 1983; Archer and Gartner 1984; Currie 1985; Messner and Rosenfeld 1994; also see Lynch 1995). This finding prompts my first proposition:

1. *America has higher rates of serious crime than other industrialized nations because it is a less supportive society*.

I am not claiming that Americans, as individuals, are ungenerous in giving their money to charity or their time to voluntary organizations; quite the opposite appears to be the case (Wuthnow 1991). Even so, I assert that American society is not *organized*, structurally or culturally, to be socially supportive. This conclusion receives confirmation from several sources, which makes interrelated or complementary points.

First, Braithwaite (1989: 100) observes that societies differ in their "communitarian" quality—that is, in the extent to which "individuals are densely enmeshed in interdependencies which have the special qualities of *mutual help and trust*" (emphasis added). With a mobile, heterogenous, urban population, the United States is low in communitarianism. Accordingly the structural basis for creating and sustaining supportive social relations is weak.

Second, numerous commentators—often referred to as communitarians—have documented the corrosive effects of America's culture of excessive individualism (Bellah et al. 1985, 1991; Coles 1993; Etzioni 1993; Reich 1988; Wuthnow 1991). In the influential *Habits of the Heart*, Bellah et al. (1985) decry in particular "utilitarian individualism"—the dominance of individual self-interest in the pursuit of desired, usually material ends (also see Messner and Rosenfeld 1994). "We have committed," says Bellah et al. (1985: 285), "what to the republican founders of our nation was the cardinal sin: we have put our own good, as individuals, as groups, as a nation, above the common good." Building a "good society," in which concern for community and mutuality of support dominate, awaits a fundamental "transformation of American culture" (Bellah et al. 1985: 275–96, 1991).

Wuthnow (1991) notes that even compassion is "bounded" by the culture of individualism. Compassionate behavior is managed by being segmented into limited roles (e.g., a few hours of volunteer work). If pursued so extensively that it interferes with a person's self-interest, such behavior is regarded as an unhealthy obsession (1991: 191–220). As a result, while "some of the work—the work that can be divided up into limited commitments—is accomplished, much of it remains to be done" (1991: 220)....

In short, Wuthnow suggests that the demand for support in America exceeds the supply. This observation leads to a corollary to the first proposition: *The more a society is deficient in the support needed, the higher its crime rate will be*.

Third, Currie (1985, 1989, 1993) makes perhaps the most compelling case that support is low in America and is linked inextricably to the country's high violent crime rate. As Currie points out, America's past and recent economic development has disrupted the traditional "private cushions" provided by networks of social support. Unlike other Western nations, however, America's welfare state has been stingy, if not mean-spirited, in the support it offers to

the casualties of the social dislocation and wide inequalities bred by this development (also see Block et al. 1987). The cost of undermining the delivery of support, argues Currie, is an inordinately high rate of violent crime....

Currie also challenges attempts to relate America's high crime rate to a weakness in control. Because other Western nations are more socially integrated, the argument goes, they are better able to exercise informal controls over their citizens (Adler 1983; Bayley 1976). Although this view may have merit, it overlooks the role of support in reducing crime. Japan offers an instructive example. Currie (1985: 46) notes that previous analyses have neglected "the ways in which Japanese society is more *supportive* than ours, not simply more 'controlling'" (author's emphasis). In particular, he points both to Japan's "private mechanisms of social obligation" and to Japan's efforts to limit inequality and to provide lifetime job security to most workers (also see Beirne and Messerschmidt 1991: 608–609).

As I will discuss again later, the broader point here is that criminologists often confound the effects of informal control with those of social support. These concepts are not necessarily rivals in explaining criminal behavior; in reality, support and control may be mutually reinforcing in reducing crime. Still the distinction between the two is important both for achieving theoretical precision and because their policy implications can differ dramatically....

The social ecology of support and crime varies not only across but also within nations (Currie 1985). Thus I offer a second proposition:

2. *The less social support there is in a community, the higher the crime rate will be.*

This thesis is buttressed by several pieces of evidence. Admittedly, quantitative research on communities and crime has not systematically explored the relationship of social support to crime (Bursik and Grasmick 1993a; Byrne and Sampson 1986; Reiss and Tonry 1986; but see Zuravin 1989). Nonetheless, variables employed in various studies may be viewed as operationalizing the concept of support.

First, there is evidence that governmental assistance to the poor tends to lessen violent crime across ecological units (DeFronzo 1983; Messner 1986; see Rosenfeld 1986). Thus, contrary to conservatives' claims that welfare corrodes individual initiative and fosters irresponsibility, including lawlessness (Ellwood 1988; Murray 1984; but see Block et al. 1987), it appears that state support buffers against criminogenic forces (also see Currie 1985, 1989, 1993).

Second, research reveals that crime rates are higher in communities characterized by family disruption, weak friendship networks, and low participation in local voluntary organizations (Sampson 1986a, 1986b; Sampson and Groves 1989). Sampson interprets these findings as an indication that such communities are unable to exert informal social control over their residents (also see Bursik and Grasmick 1993b). Although this perspective may have merit, it is unclear why these variables are measures of control and not of support. It is telling that the mental illness literature uses neighborhood interaction and participation in voluntary organizations to assess "community and network support" (Lin, Dumin, and Woelfel 1986). Further, high rates of family disruption may operationalize not only adults' ability to exert surveillance over youths but also the availability to youths of both adult support networks and the opportunity to develop intimate relations. In short, existing ecological studies can be interpreted as containing measures of social support and, in turn, as showing that support reduces rates of criminal involvement....

Quantitative and ethnographic research on the "underclass" or the "truly disadvantaged" also is relevant to the social ecology of crime and support. This research documents the powerful social forces—deindustrialization, joblessness, persisting racial segregation, migration to the suburbs—that have created socially and economically isolated inner-city enclaves (Devine and Wright 1993; Jencks and Peterson 1991; Lemann 1991; Massey and Denton 1993; Sullivan 1989; Wilson 1987). This trend, which has been described as a continuing process of social and cultural "disinvestment" in these neighborhoods, has enormous social consequences (Hagan 1993a; Short 1990, 1991).

The literature essentially documents the erosion of community social institutions and of their ability to provide social support. Wilson (1987: 144) notes, for example, that the departure of many middle-class families from inner-city neighborhoods reduced the "social buffer" or human capital needed to "absorb the shock or cushion the effect of uneven economic growth and periodic recessions." Similarly, in his review of Anderson's (1990) *Street Wise*, an ethnography of the Philadelphia neighborhood of "Northton," Hagan (1993a: 329) shows how "structural and cultural disinvestment" has frayed the supportive relations between adults and youths that previously protected youths against crime....

In short, my thesis is that both across nations and across communities, crime rates vary inversely with the level of social support. The social ecologists of crime have largely overlooked this possibility, but (as I hope I have revealed) their work contains evidence favoring the social support thesis and offers important clues for future investigation. In the next section I explore ways in which the presence or absence of support is implicated in individuals' involvement in crime.

Support and Crime

Since the inception of American criminology, interest in the criminogenic effects of family life has ebbed and flowed (Wilkinson 1974). Over the past decade, attention has increased once again, in part because of the American family's beleaguered status (Sykes and Cullen 1992) and in part because of the emergence of salient criminological findings showing that the pathway to serious adult criminality begins in childhood (Loeber and Le Blanc 1990; Nagin and Farrington 1992; Nagin and Paternoster 1991; Sampson and Laub 1993).

This renewed interest has prompted not only numerous empirical studies on family correlates of crime (Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber 1986; Wells and Rankin 1991) but also widely read theoretical frameworks. Although these theories differ fundamentally, they emphasize the criminogenic role that the family plays by the way it exercises or instills *control* (Colvin and Pauly 1983; Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990; Hagan 1989; Regoli and Hewitt 1994; Wilson and Herrnstein 1985). These perspectives are earning a measure of empirical confirmation (see, for example, Akers 1994; Burton et al. 1994; Grasmick et al. 1993; Hagan 1989; Hagan, Gillis, and Simpson 1990; Messner and Krohn 1990); thus I will not argue against their value. At the same time, as a result of criminologists' emphasis on control, virtually no theoretical attention has been paid to how family-related social support, or its absence, is involved in crime causation. Accordingly I offer my third proposition:

3. *The more support a family provides, the less likely it is that a person will engage in crime.*

We have considerable evidence that parental expressive support diminishes children's risk of criminal involvement....

The firmest empirical evidence, however, can be drawn from Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber's (1986) comprehensive meta-analysis of family correlates of delinquency: factors indicating a lack of parental support clearly increase delinquent involvement. (Also see Feldman's [1993: 196] discussion of "positive parenting.") Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber conclude that delinquency is related inversely to "child-parent involvement, such as the amount of intimate communication, confiding, sharing of activities, and seeking help" (1986: 42). Similarly, their analysis indicates that measures of parental rejection of children, such as "rejection, not warm, lack of love, lack of affection, less affectionate," were "consistently related to delinquency and aggression" (1986: 54; also see Sampson and Laub 1993: 119). These "support" elements, moreover, were among the most powerful family factors related to delinquency; their effects exceeded those of parental criminality, marital discord, parental absence, parental health, and family size (1993: 120–23)....

In contrast to expressive support, criminological research contains few empirical studies on the impact of instrumental family support on crime (see, for example, Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber 1986). It is premature to conclude that instrumental support is as salient as expressive support, and possibly these forms of support vary in their effects across the life cycle. In any case, the literature contains some clues as to the importance of instrumental family support. Thus, if we revisit Glueck and Glueck (1950: 129–30), we discover that delinquents were more likely than nondelinquents to have parents who "had not given any thought to the boys' futures." Further, as noted above, family-based networks are an important source of entry into the job market; this, in turn, can undermine continued involvement in crime (Sullivan 1989; also see Curtis 1989: 155).

Finally, any discussion of families and crime must be careful to avoid what Currie (1985: 185) calls the "fallacy of autonomy—the belief that what goes on inside the family can usefully be separated from the forces that affect it from

the outside: the larger social context in which families are embedded for better or for worse." Indeed, large social forces have transformed many American families in ways that often have reduced their capacity to support children (see, for example, Hewlett 1991; Wilson 1987). For example, adolescents today are much less likely than in the past to eat evening meals with parents or to spend time at home (Felson 1994: 104; Messner and Rosenfeld 1994: 103); the potential time that parents have to spend with children is declining (Hewlett 1991: 90–92); and "less than 5 percent of all families have another adult (e.g., grandparent) living in the home, compared to 50 percent two generations ago. This reduces the backup support that might otherwise be available to working parents" (Panel on High-Risk Youth 1993: 56).

Most disconcerting, however, is the concentration of forces that have ripped apart families of the underclass, or the "truly disadvantaged" (Devine and Wright 1993; Wilson 1987), and have made inner-city youths vulnerable to crime, drugs, and an array of unhealthy behaviors (Currie 1985, 1993; Panel on High-Risk Youth 1993). The Panel on High-Risk Youth states,

> Perhaps the most serious risk facing adolescents in high-risk settings is isolation from the nurturance, safety, and guidance that comes from sustained relationships with adults. Parents are the best source of support, but for many adolescents, parents are not positively involved in their lives. In some cases, parents are absent or abusive. In many more cases, parents strive to be good parents, but lack the capacity or opportunity to be so. (1993: 213)

Accordingly I offer this as a corollary to my third proposition: *The more support is given to families, the less crime will occur*. As Rivara and Farrington (forthcoming) observe, "increased social support to families can take the form of information (e.g., parenting programs), emotional support (e.g., home visitors), provision of material needs (e.g., food stamps, housing) or instrumental help (e.g., day care)." They also note that the "most successful interventions appear to be those which offer more than one type of social support service, thereby affecting a number of risk factors for the development of delinquency and violence" (forthcoming; also see Farrington 1994). Echoing this theme, Currie (1989: 18–19, 1993: 310–17) argues persuasively that the government should institute a "genuinely supportive national family policy," including, for example, child care, family leaves, and special programs for families at risk for mistreating children.

Currie's (1985, 1989, 1993) analyses and the above discussion on changing levels of support within the American family lead to a second corollary: *Changes in levels of support for and by families have contributed since the 1960s to increases in crime and to the concentration of serious violence in high-risk inner-city neighborhoods*. This statement contradicts the thinking of Murray (1984), who blames the "generous revolution" of the Great Society programs for eroding individual responsibility and for fostering criminal and other deviant behaviors (see Lemann 1991; Lupo 1994).

Beyond the family, Krohn (1986) contends that social networks may provide a "web of conformity" (also see Sampson and Laub 1993). Krohn emphasizes how dimensions of networks operate to control behavior; scholars in the sociology of mental illness study how these characteristics of networks are an important source of social support (Lin et al. 1986; Vaux 1988). In short, the web of conformity involves not only constraints but also supports (Sullivan 1989; also see Zuravin 1989). This point leads to my fourth proposition:

4. *The more social support in a person's social network, the less crime will occur.*

Social support theorists have examined most extensively how supports mitigate the effects of strain or "stress." The relationships are complex, but social supports can prevent stresses from arising or can lessen negative consequences if stresses should emerge (House 1981; Vaux 1988). These findings are important in light of the recent revitalization of strain theory, particularly empirical research linking strain to criminal behavior (Agnew 1985a, 1989; Agnew and

White 1992; Burton and Cullen 1992; Farnworth and Leiber 1989; McCarthy and Hagan 1992; Vaux and Ruggiero 1983)....

The remaining issue, largely ignored by strain theorists (Cullen 1984), is how people respond to this range of stressful conditions. Building on the social support literature (e.g., Vaux 1988), Agnew (1992) suggests that the ability to cope with criminogenic strains is contingent on access to supports. "Adolescents with conventional social support," he observes, "should be better able to respond to objective strains in a nondelinquent manner" (1992: 72). This contention suggests my fifth proposition:

5. *Social support lessens the effects of exposure to criminogenic strains.*

In their important reassessment of Glueck and Glueck's longitudinal data, Sampson and Laub (1993) study not only sources of the stability of crime across the life course but also the "turning points" at which offenders depart from the criminal "pathway." Their analysis shows that during adulthood, job stability and attachments to spouse contribute to desistance from crime. They interpret these findings as indicating that "adult social bonds" provide offenders with social capital which subjects them to "informal social controls" (1993: 140–43). "Adult social ties," they observe, "create interdependent systems of obligation and restraint that impose significant costs for translating criminal propensities into action" (1993: 141).

I will not take issue with the control theory set forth by Sampson and Laub, but I observe that their *Crime in the Making* also contains insights on the salience of adult *social supports*. Thus Sampson and Laub (1993: 141) take note of the "social capital invested by employers and spouses," not simply that invested by offenders. With regard to marriage, for example, life histories on offenders in Glueck and Glueck's sample reveal that this investment took the form of wives' providing "material and emotional *support*" (Sampson and Laub 1993: 205, 220, emphasis added; also see Vaux 1988: 173). Two points follow from this observation.

First, marital and employment "social supports" may reduce crime by increasing social capital and thus expanding the basis for informal social controls. Second, these social supports may exert independent (main) effects on crime not by facilitating control but by reducing other sources of crime (e.g., lessening emotional difficulties, relieving strains, transforming deviant identities). More broadly, I offer my sixth proposition:

6. *Across the life cycle, social support increases the likelihood that offenders will turn away from a criminal pathway.*

I do not mean to confine this proposition to the role of adult social supports in crime desistance. In particular, accounts of at-risk youths suggest that supports can trigger their turning away from crime (see also Dubow and Reid 1994). Such supports may involve a youth's special informal relationship with an adult (e.g., teacher, coach), participation in a mentorship program (Kuznik 1994; Panel on High-Risk Youth 1993: 213–14), or placement in a community program (Curtis 1989: 154–60).

Commentary on impoverished juveniles at risk for crime also frequently emphasizes the sense of isolation felt by these youths. The Panel on High-Risk [Youth] (1993: 217), for example, notes that "young people from high-risk settings" often "confront the emotional pain and feelings of hopelessness that can interfere with positive development." Echoing this theme, Curtis (1989: 158) observes that inner-city minority youths think "the cards are stacked hopelessly against them. These youths believe that fate will not permit them to 'make it, in any legitimate form."

This isolation might be viewed as a detachment from social bonds that lessens control and increases criminal involvement, but another process also may be operating. These youths may perceive that they will always lack the

instrumental and expressive supports needed to change the circumstances in which they are enmeshed. This possibility leads to my seventh proposition:

7. *Anticipation of a lack of social support increases criminal involvement.*

Thus far I have concentrated on how *receiving* support diminished criminality, but it also seems important to consider how *giving* support affects involvement in crime. The logic of writings from the peacemaking/humanist and feminist perspectives suggests that providing support should reduce criminal propensities (McDermott 1994. Pepinsky (1988), in fact, regards crime as the opposite of "responsiveness" to others. Further, in *The Call of Service*, Coles (1993) tells how the experience of supporting others can transform selves, inculcate idealism, foster moral purpose, and create long-standing interconnections—all of which would seem anti-criminogenic.

I know of no systematic empirical investigation of the link between giving support and crime, but some insights can be gleaned from the research. Sampson and Laub (1993: 219–20), for example, note that the offenders in their study were likely to desist from crime when they were devoted to their spouses and children, and were "financially responsible not only to their spouses, but also to parents and siblings if the need arose." That is, as offenders assumed a role as providers of expressive and instrumental support, their involvement in crime ceased….

Lynne Goodstein (personal communication, January 2, 1994) offers another pertinent insight: "Women's traditional responsibility for the delivery of social support and nurturance to others (children, elders, partners) and the dramatically lower crime rates for women is an interesting association." Although this association is open to differing interpretations, it suggests that the experience of providing support creates sentiments (e.g., compassion), identities, role expectations, and problem-solving skills that are generally incompatible with the "seductions of crime" (Katz 1988; also see Gilligan, Ward, and Taylor 1988).

In any event, these various considerations lead to my eighth proposition:

8. *Giving social support lessens involvement in crime.*

Finally, Albert Cohen (personal communication, January 29, 1994) has alerted me to the need to consider the broader concept of "differential social support." To this point, I have largely explored the role of supports in making conformity possible. Cohen, however, observes

> that social support is equally important to nonconformity, to crime. Indeed, the burden of much of the literature on causation is that associations, the situation of company, provide much of the support that makes it possible to break the law, more effectively to thwart the justice process and reduce the "hurtfulness" and other consequences of punishment.

Indeed, insights on support for crime are evident in the literature on peers and co-offending (Reiss 1988), on the acquisition and performance of criminal roles (Cloward 1959; Steffensmeier 1983), and on the organizational conditions that make corporate crime possible (Hills 1987; Sutherland 1949). Differential social support also might operate in situational contexts. As shown by Richard Felson (1982; Felson and Tedeschi 1993), "third parties" to interpersonal conflict can support the escalation of violence or can mediate tensions and diminish subsequent aggression. These observations lead to my ninth proposition:

9. *Crime is less likely when social support for conformity exceeds social support for crime.*

In a related vein, Ronald Akers (personal communication, January 1994) has cautioned that social supports are likely to be most effective when they are linked to "conformity-inducing outcomes." The *source* of the support may be particularly important. For instance, support from conformist sources may not only address criminal risk factors (e.g., strain) but also provide an opportunity for prosocial modeling (Andrews and Bonta 1994: 202–205).

Conversely, support from criminal friends (e.g., comfort in the face of a stressful life event) may be counteracted if these associations also expose youths to criminogenic influences.

On this point, the research on the effects of marriage provides relevant data. Although the findings are not fully consistent (Sampson and Laub 1993), we find some evidence that marriage—conceptualized here as a social support—reduces crime only if spouses are not themselves deviant or criminal (Farrington, Ohlin, and Wilson, 1986: 56; West 1982: 100–104). Thus I offer this corollary to Proposition 9: *Social support from conformist sources is most likely to reduce criminal involvement*.

Support and Control

As stated earlier, recent advances in criminological theory have been dominated by attempts to link control with crime. I have tried to show that these perspectives overlook social support and potentially confound the effects of control with the effects of support. Now I wish to make a different, but related, argument, which is set forth in my tenth proposition:

10. *Social support often is a precondition for effective social control.*

The criminological literature contains numerous illustrations of this proposition. Braithwaite's (1989) influential theory of "reintegrative shaming," however, is perhaps the most noteworthy example (also see Braithwaite and Muford 1994; Makkai and Braithwaite 1994). In brief, Braithwaite contends that legal violations often evoke formal and informal attempts at "shaming," which he defines as "all processes of expressing disapproval which have the intention or effect of invoking remorse in the person being shamed and/or condemnation by others who become aware of the shaming" (1989: 9). Braithwaite observes, however, that shaming takes two general forms. Disintegrative shaming is criminogenic; as labeling theory would predict, it stigmatizes, excludes, and ensures the exposure of offenders to criminogenic conditions. Reintegrative shaming, in contrast, achieves conformity. After the act is condemned, attempts are made "to reintegrate the offender back into the community of law-abiding or respectable citizens through words or gestures of forgiveness or ceremonies to decertify the offender as deviant" (1989: 100–101). Even if repeated efforts are required, the goal is to avoid exclusion and thus to embed the offender in conventional, accepting relationships (Braithwaite and Muford 1994).

In the language of the social support paradigm, Braithwaite is asserting that control can be effective only in the context of support (see Sherman 1992). Further, the very likelihood that reintegrative shaming will be used depends on the extent to which the larger society is supportive, or, as Braithwaite puts it, "communitarian." Not surprisingly, shaming in the United States tends to be disintegrative (also see Benson 1990).

A related insight can be gained from the correctional literature. It appears that family support of offenders during and after incarceration improves chances of successful completion of parole supervision (Farrington et al. 1986: 147; Wright and Wright 1992: 54). In short, control with support is more effective than control by itself.

The family socialization literature also offers useful information. Wilson and Herrnstein (1985: 237–40) argue that "restrictive" parenting is important in detecting and discouraging rule transgressions and thus in teaching that behavior has consequences. But restrictiveness is most effective when coupled with parental warmth. "A warm parent," they state, "is approving and supportive of the child, frequently employs praise as a reinforcement for good behavior, and explains the reasons for rules" (1985: 237). In this case, warmth (support) empowers restrictiveness (control): when children care about their parents, obedience is rewarding and disobedience is unrewarding (1985: 239)....

Good Criminology and the Good Society

Over the past decade, an increasing number of voices have joined in a national conversation about the requirements for what Robert Bellah and his colleagues call the "Good Society" (Bellah et al. 1991; also see Bellah et al. 1985; Coles 1993; Etzioni 1993; Reich 1988; Wuthnow 1991). Fundamental to this ongoing conversation is a critique of the excessive individualism in the United States, which too often degenerates into a politics justifying either the crass pursuit of rights or materialistic self-aggrandizement. In this context, there is a lack of attention to the public good, service to others, and an appreciation for our need for connectedness. Accordingly there is a call to revitalize our common bonds and to build a society supportive of all its citizens.

I realize the risk in linking one's criminology to a larger social agenda: regardless of how crime is affected, attempts to build a Good Society certainly should stand or fall on their own merits (Felson 1994: 12–13). Still, it is equally misguided to assume that criminological ideas have no consequences (Bohm 1993; Lilly et al. 1989). A criminology that emphasizes the need for social supports thus may have the potential to make a difference.

Indeed, if the social supports paradigm proves to be "Good Criminology," it will provide empirical grounds for suggesting that an important key to solving the crime problem is the construction of a supportive social order—the Good Society. Accordingly this paradigm may present an opportunity to challenge the current hegemony of punitive policy in criminal justice. It may prompt us to consider that the cost of a nonsupportive society, exacerbated by mean-spirited or neglectful public policies, is a disgraceful level of crime and violence (Currie 1985). And, hopefully, it may provide the basis for criminal justice and public policies which help to create a society that is more supportive and hence safer for its citizens.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is social support (describe the major types of support in your response)? What types of questions would you ask someone to measure the social support he or she receives? How does social support differ from social control?
2. Why does the United States provide less social support than many other industrialized nations? Why do some communities and families provide less social support than others?
3. Describe the different ways in which low social support might contribute to crime. Consider social support as a direct cause of crime, as an indirect cause (which influences other variables that cause crime), and as a conditioning variable (which influences the effect of other variables on crime).
4. Describe how the concept of social support is related to any two of the other theories discussed in this volume (e.g., do these theories make implicit or explicit reference to social support; would a more explicit consideration of social support strengthen these theories—for example, by shedding additional light on the causes of the independent variables in these theories or on the factors that influencethe effects of these variables on crime?).

50.
Social Concern and Crime*

Robert Agnew

Crime theories are based on certain underlying assumptions, including assumptions about human nature (Agnew, 2011, 2014). As Agnew argues in this chapter, crime theories most commonly assume that people are self-interested, focused on the satisfaction of their needs and desires. Crime is therefore most likely when the costs of crime are low and the benefits are high. And many crime theories, including control and social learning theories, focus on the costs and/or benefits of crime.

But in this chapter, Agnew argues that much recent research challenges the idea that people are simply self-interested. Rather, human nature is more complex. While people possess some self-interest, they also show much concern for others. Agnew describes the nature of this social concern: people care about the welfare of others, desire close ties to certain others, follow certain moral intuitions (e.g., not causing harm to innocent others), and are inclined to conform to the behavior and views of others. This social concern is said to be part of human nature because it is widespread and has some genetic basis. Agnew further argues that people are malleable, such that they are shaped by their social environment. Certain environmental factors increase social concern, while others reduce it. Social concern, for example, is more likely when people have strong bonds to prosocial others and learn concern from them.

According to Agnew, the fact that people possess some social concern has major implications for crime theories. It means that crime is not simply a function of costs and benefits. Social concern generally inhibits crime, and people often refrain from crime even when they would benefit from it. Crime theories therefore need to consider those factors that lead individuals to act contrary to their concern for others, factors such as strain or stress.

Further, Agnew argues that individuals and groups vary in their level of social concern, for both biological and social reasons. This variation contributes to variation in crime, a proposition that is at the core of Agnew's theory of social concern and crime. In particular, crime is generally less likely when social concern is high. Agnew lists additional propositions describing the relationship between social concern and crime. For example, social concern has an indirect effect on crime, through its effect on strain, control, and social learning. And social concern influences or conditions the effect of other causes on crime (e.g., strain is more likely to lead to crime when social concern is low).

Agnew's theory is relatively new and has not yet been subject to a full test. But, as described in this chapter, the theory is compatible with certain research, such as the research on the relationship between empathy and crime (also see Agnew, 2011; Chouhy et al., 2016, 2017; TenEyck and Barnes, 2019). In the tradition of positive criminology, Agnew's theory suggests that criminology may benefit a great deal if it expands its focus beyond negative traits, such as low self-control, and considers positive traits, such as those that comprise social concern.

References

Agnew, Robert. 2011. *Toward a Unified Criminology: Integrating Assumptions About Crime, People, and Society*. New York: New York University Press.

____. 2014. "Social Concern and Crime: Moving Beyond the Assumption of Simple Self-Interest." *Criminology* **52**: 1–32.

Chouhy, Cecilia, Robert Agnew, and Francis T. Cullen. 2016. "Social Concern and Crime." *Oxford Handbooks Online* May: 1–35. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935383.013.135

Chouhy, Cecilia, Spencer T. Hochstetler, and Francis T. Cullen. 2017. "Social Concern and Delinquency: An Empirical Assessment of a Novel Theory." *Deviant Behavior* **38**: 94–117.

TenEyck, Michael and J. C. Barnes. 2019. "A Preliminary Test of the Association between Agnew's Social Concern and Criminal Behavior: Results from a Nationally Representative Sample of Adults." *Deviant Behavior* **40**: 187–204.

Perhaps the core assumption of criminology is that people are naturally self-interested, focused on the satisfaction of their needs and desires. Most theories are built on this assumption. Crime is said to result when people have not learned to control the pursuit of their interests or are in environments where their interests are better served through crime. Likewise, most crime-control initiatives focus on reducing the criminogenic pursuit of interests, usually by increasing the costs of crime.

This article presents an expanded view of human nature and discusses the implications of this view for the causes and control of crime. It is argued that:

- People are naturally socially concerned as well as self-interested; that is, people have a set of biologically based inclinations that sometimes lead them to give more consideration to others than to their own interests. These inclinations include caring about others, forming close ties to and cooperating with them, following certain moral intuitions, and conforming. People follow these inclinations even when there is no extrinsic benefit and perhaps some cost to doing so. There are, however, individual, demographic, and circumstantial variations in the strength of these inclinations.
- Social concern has direct, indirect, mediating, and conditioning effects on crime. Although social concern generally reduces crime, it has little effect on or increases crime in certain circumstances.
- The social environment also has a large impact on social concern, influencing the level and nature of social concern, as well as its expression. These environmental effects suggest several strategies for controlling crime.…

---

* Reprinted from Robert Agnew. 2014. "Social Concern and Crime: Moving Beyond the Assumption of Simple Self-Interest." *Criminology* 32: 1–32.

The Dominance of Self-Interest in Criminology

Nature of Self-Interest

The criminological assumption of self-interest has three components. First, individuals are strongly motivated to satisfy their needs and desires, particularly their short-term needs/desires. This provides substantial motivation for crime because crime is often the most expedient way to get what you want….

Second, individuals give priority to their interests over those of others. That is, "people think of and act first for themselves … they are not naturally inclined to subordinate their interests to the interests of others" (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990: 5)….

Third, it is assumed that individuals are *somewhat* rational in the pursuit of their interests. That is, they consciously consider the costs and benefits of possible behaviors and tend to *choose* those behaviors that increase their benefits and reduce their costs….

Self-interest is said to be "natural" or part of human nature because it has a substantial genetic basis and characterizes the large majority of people (see Wilson, 2012: 193, for a discussion of human nature). Evolutionary theorists explain the pervasiveness of self-interest by arguing that individuals who put their interests above others are more likely to survive and reproduce (see Boehm, 2012; Nowak and Highfield, 2011)….

Self-Interest and the Causes and Control of Crime

If people are self-interested, they should be most likely to offend when the costs of crime are low and the benefits are high. And most of the leading crime theories focus on the costs and/or benefits of crime (Agnew, 2011; Akers, 1990; Bohm and Vogel, 2011; Lanier and Henry, 2004; Piquero and Tibbetts, 2002). Classical and deterrence theorists focus on the formal costs of crime or sanctions by the state, whereas social control theorists also examine the informal costs. These informal costs involve direct control or sanctioning by parents, teachers, neighbors, and others; the individual's emotional bond to conventional others and investments in conventional society, both of which are jeopardized by crime; and the internalization of moral beliefs, particularly the belief that crime is wrong. These theories focus on variation in the costs of crime because they assume that the benefits of crime are high and roughly comparable across individuals. That is because all individuals are said to have unfulfilled needs and desires that could easily be satisfied through crime (Kornhauser, 1978).

Social learning, rational choice, and routine activities theories, however, consider variation in both the costs and benefits of crime. Social learning theory states that the benefits of crime are higher for some individuals because they are in environments where crime is more likely to be differentially reinforced (e.g., delinquent peer groups). Rational choice and routine activities theories devote much attention to the situational factors affecting crime, and they state that some individuals are more often exposed to situations where the benefits of crime are high, such as situations where attractive targets for crime are present (also see Felson and Boba, 2010; Greenberg, in press).

Self-control theory focuses on a general trait that influences the individual's awareness of and responsiveness to the costs and benefits of crime. Those low in self-control are focused on the immediate and easy gratification of their

desires, have a preference for risky activities, have little tolerance for frustration, give little thought to the future, and are insensitive to others. As such, they are less likely to notice and be concerned about the costs of crime, and they are more likely to be tempted by the benefits of crime (Arneklev, Grasmick, and Bursik, 1999; Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; Tittle, Ward, and Grasmick, 2004). By contrast, those high in self-control have been taught by parents and others to delay gratification, exercise caution, control their emotions, work toward long-term goals, and have some concern for others. As such, they are less likely to satisfy their immediate needs and desires through crime. Rather, they are instead focused on the disciplined pursuit of their long-term interests….

In sum, most leading crime theories and crime-control policies are based on the assumption that individuals are naturally self-interested…. And, consequently, it is assumed that the task of society is to tame this self-interest, creating "a cultural overlay, a thin veneer hiding an otherwise selfish and brutish nature" (de Waal, 2006: 6)….

The Nature and Determinants of Social Concern

Recent research in several areas challenges the assumption that people are *simply* self-interested. Human nature is more complex, and people *also* are socially concerned. That is, self-interest exists alongside biologically based inclinations that serve to "suppress or regulate self-interest and make cooperative societies possible" (Haidt, 2012: 270). Social concern, in particular, refers to *a set of inclinations that sometimes lead people to give more consideration to others than to their own interests*. Social concern has four elements: people 1) care about the welfare of others, 2) desire close ties to others, 3) are inclined to follow certain moral intuitions, and 4) tend to conform to the views and behavior of others. Each of these elements substantially increases the likelihood that people will work together in ways that increase their ability, that of their kin, and/or that of the groups to which they belong to survive and reproduce (more in the subsequent discussion).

The research demonstrating the existence of social concern is summarized in Chapter 4 of *Toward a Unified Criminology* (Agnew, 2011) and numerous other sources.... Taken as a whole, this research suggests that most people are naturally inclined to:

- *Care about the welfare of others*. Survey, observational, and experimental data suggest that most people feel distress at the suffering of innocent others. Furthermore, people are inclined to help innocent others in distress, particularly when they personally encounter these others. This is the case even when there is no benefit and some cost to providing the help (see Agnew, 2011, for an overview). Empathy and sympathy seem to be at the heart of this inclination, including "emotional contagion" or feeling what others feel; "cognitive empathy" or understanding the other's situation, including the reasons for their distress; and sympathy or feelings of sorrow or concern for the distressed other....
- *Desire close ties to certain others, including ties of an emotional and cooperative nature*. Data from a variety of sources indicate that people seek close emotional ties to certain others, even when such ties provide no extrinsic rewards. Furthermore, people want to feel accepted and valued by these others. And people suffer negative emotional and other effects when rejected (see especially Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Leary, 2010). People also are inclined to cooperate with others in instrumental endeavors, even when selfish behavior would be to their greater advantage. For example, when people are asked to play games that provide the opportunity for selfish and cooperative behavior, they tend to cooperate even though their interests would be better served by selfish behavior. People also are inclined to punish those who do not cooperate, even at some cost to themselves (Agnew, 2011).
- *Follow certain moral intuitions, as well as punish those who violate such intuitions*. Data from a variety of sources, including experiments, surveys that ask people how they would respond to moral dilemmas, and cross-cultural observations, suggest that people share certain moral intuitions (see Agnew, 2011). Although there is still some debate over the nature of these intuitions and the extent to which they are "natural" versus learned, these intuitions likely include 1) not killing or physically harming innocent others; 2) not taking the property of innocent others by force or theft; and 3) treating others in an equitable manner (e.g., not cheating or engaging in deceptive practices in exchange relationships, not "free-riding" off the contributions of others, distributing earned resources on the basis of inputs, sharing with equal partners, and giving needed resources to those dependent on you)....

- *Conform to the behavior and views of others and, more generally, to social norms, as well as sanction those who violate social norms*. Much research indicates that people have a strong inclination to conform to the behavior and views of others and to social norms more generally, even at some cost to themselves (Agnew, 2011). Furthermore, people are inclined to sanction those who violate social norms. At the same time, it should be noted that people can distinguish acts that cause significant harm from those that simply violate social conventions, and they favor stronger sanctions for harmful acts.

Research suggests that people generally act on these inclinations with little forethought and that such action involves that part of the brain concerned with emotions rather than with rational thought, including emotions such as compassion, guilt, and anger. A major contribution of the recent research on social concern, in fact, is the suggestion that behavior is frequently more habitual and less rational/deliberative than is commonly thought….

Relationship Between Social Concern and Self-Control

Both social concern and self-control act as constraints on that type of self-interest involving the pursuit of short-term needs and desires. But social concern is nevertheless distinct from self-control. Self-control involves an *enlightened* self-interest, wherein individuals have learned to control the pursuit of their short-term needs and desires (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; also see Paternoster and Pogarsky, 2009). They are instead focused on the quasi-rational pursuit of their long-term interests, have an aversion to risky activities, and possess some *learned* concern for others. By contrast, social concern is a set of biologically based inclinations that sometimes lead individuals to act in ways independent of and even in conflict with their interests—both short and long term. Furthermore, social concern is more often intuitive than rational/deliberative in nature. Research suggests that social concern coexists with self-interest, both immediate and enlightened. That is, both social concern and self-interest motivate behavior, although their relative influence varies across individuals, sociodemographic groups, and circumstances (more in the subsequent discussion)….

Individual, Sociodemographic, and Circumstantial Variation in Social Concern

Although social concern and the behavior it inspires are common, some people possess more concern than others (e.g., Agnew, 2011; Balliet, Parks, and Joireman, 2009; Boehm, 2012; Haidt and Kesebir, 2010; Knafo and Israel, 2010; Penner and Orom, 2010; Singer, 1981; Willer, Flynn, and Simpson, 2013). For example, although most people share with others in games that provide the opportunity for both sharing and self-interested behavior, some share more than others and a small percentage act in a strictly self-interested manner. Also, females show stronger inclinations for social concern than males (see Dovidio et al., 2006; Jolliffe and Farrington, 2007; Lahey and Waldman, 2005: 34–5; McGinley and Carlo, 2007; Walsh and Beaver, 2009; Walsh and Bolen, 2012). Likewise, there is evidence for age differences in many of the inclinations that comprise social concern, such as the inclination to conform (e.g., Dovidio et al., 2006; McGinley and Carlo, 2007; Walsh and Beaver, 2009, 2012).

Furthermore, the inclinations for social concern are weaker in some circumstances than in others (e.g., Bowles and Gintis, 2011; de Waal, 2008; Dovidio and Gaertner, 2010; Dovidio et al., 2006; Haidt, 2012; Haidt and Kesebir, 2010; Piliavin and Charng, 1990; Pinker, 2011; Wilson, Tumminelli, and Sesma, 2009; Wilson, 2012). Most notably, social concern is weaker when individuals interact with outgroup members, including those they view as different on salient dimensions and those that they dislike or distrust. Social concern also is weaker when individuals believe that others have violated the moral intuitions or otherwise have engaged in deviant acts. It is weaker when individuals are

competing for scarce resources, including status and dominance. And it is weaker when individuals are in bad moods or are preoccupied with their own distress. In sum, social concern is both a state and a trait variable; individuals and sociodemographic groups differ in their general tendency for social concern, and social concern varies across circumstances (see especially Goetz, Keltner, and Simon-Thompson, 2010; see Horney, 2006, and Piquero and Bouffard, 2007, who make a similar argument regarding self-control).

In addition, the prosocial behavior motivated by social concern, such as cooperation and helping others in need, also is affected by its costs and benefits (Boehm, 2012; Dovidio et al., 2006; Goetz, Keltner, and Simon-Thomson, 2010). For example, although people cooperate with others even when they would benefit more from selfish behavior, they are *more* likely to cooperate when the costs are low and the benefits are high. (Those high in social concern, however, are more likely to estimate the costs of prosocial behavior as low [Penner et al., 1995].) And although people provide *anonymous* help to others, they are more likely to help in the presence of others because groups tend to reward prosocial behavior (Batson, 2010; Dovidio et al., 2006; Haidt and Kesebir, 2010; Komter, 2010; Nowak and Highfield, 2011; Willer, 2009; Willer, Flynn, and Simpson, 2013). The research on prosocial behavior does not deny the importance of self-interest; rather, it suggests that people are influenced by both self-interest *and* social concern.

Evidence for Natural Social Concern

Much evidence suggests that the inclinations that comprise social concern have a substantial biological basis. Certain of the inclinations for social concern emerge in inventories of human universals, such as the inclinations to follow social norms and to feel distress at the suffering of innocent others, especially members of one's ingroup (Agnew, 2011). Many inclinations appear very early in life, before there has been much opportunity for social learning. Very young children, for example, are inclined to form strong attachments to caregivers and to help others in distress. Many inclinations are exhibited by nonhuman primates, where social learning plays a much smaller role. For example, nonhuman primates often show concern for the pain of others; try to avoid causing harm to others, especially close others; and display some commitment to reciprocity (Agnew, 2011; de Waal, 2006). The inclinations are *somewhat* independent of social learning. For example, the tendency for young children to help others is maintained regardless of whether it is rewarded or ignored (see Warneken and Tomasello, 2009). And the inclinations have some genetic basis and are linked to aspects of brain structure and functioning (Agnew, 2011; Ebstein et al., 2010; Eisenberg, Eggum, and Di Giunta, 2010; Walsh and Beaver, 2012)....

The Effect of Environmental Factors on Social Concern

Much evidence suggests that the inclinations for social concern are shaped by a range of social experiences, as well as by the sociodemographic, community, and societal characteristics that impact these experiences. Among other things, social factors influence the level of social concern, who is viewed as worthy of concern, what is viewed as harmful and immoral, and the conditions where social concern is considered more and less applicable. The effect of social factors, however, is not unlimited. For example, all societies condemn theft from and the killing of innocent others. And while there is some variation in definitions of theft and homicide, there is much overlap (Kornhauser, 1978). Nevertheless, environmental factors have a large impact on social concern. This impact can be described in terms of the major crime theories, including social learning, strain, control, social support, and critical theories.

The inclinations for social concern are shaped through social learning, including differential reinforcement, modeling, the presentation of beliefs, and the cultivation of identities (e.g., Dovidio et al., 2006; Ellis, 1971; Laible, Eye, and Carlo, 2008; Lerner and Clayton, 2011; Penner et al., 2005; Stets and Carter, 2012). Expressions of social

concern are generally rewarded by social groups, and this reward typically strengthens the inclinations and their likelihood of expression.... Social concern is strengthened and its expression more likely when individuals are exposed to models who show concern (Piliavin and Charng, 1990). Several literatures describe those beliefs that encourage social concern, as well as the justifications and excuses that some learn for not showing concern.... Drawing on social learning theories of crime, one key prediction is that those who associate with criminal peers will be less likely to learn and act on the inclinations for social concern, particularly for those outside their peer group. Among other things, such individuals are less likely to be reinforced for concern, exposed to socially concerned models, taught beliefs favorable to concern, and associated with this, develop identities that emphasize concern.

There is also evidence that strain reduces social concern, particularly major strains that are perceived as unjust (Agnew, 2007). Individuals who are unjustly treated in a negative manner come to distrust other people and focus on their own distress. Consequently, concern for others is reduced (e.g., Colvin, 2000; Hochstetler, Copes, and Williams, 2010; Maier-Katkin, Mears, and Bernard, 2009; Simons and Burt, 2011). It is unclear, however, whether strain reduces social concern in a linear fashion. Certain data suggest that the relationship may be nonlinear, with high strain reducing concern and *moderate* strain fostering concern, particularly empathy/sympathy for others (Piff et al., 2010; Stellar et al., 2012). The argument is that *some* experience with strain makes one more understanding of and concerned about the suffering of others. More research is needed in this area, however.

Just as negative relations with others reduce social concern, strong bonds to conventional others and the receipt of social support increase concern. Strong bonds and support reduce strain and increase the likelihood that one will learn concern from others. Beyond that, strong bonds and support foster ingroup ties and a positive view of others, such that others are more likely to be considered worthy of concern (Colvin, Cullen, and Vander Ven, 2002; Dovidio et al., 2006). Relatedly, research suggests that dependence on others fosters social concern. Dependence makes one more attentive to others, more desirous of close ties with them, and more inclined to conform (Piff et al., 2010; Stellar et al., 2012; van Kleef et al., 2008).

Furthermore, one's social position, as indexed by factors such as class and gender, affects social concern. Social position affects one's social learning, thereby affecting social concern. Females, for example, are more often socialized to be caring and channeled into roles that reward social concern (for overviews, see Broidy et al., 2003; Dovidio et al., 2006). And this partly explains why females are higher in most aspects of social concern, such as empathy/sympathy....

Finally, larger social forces influence social concern. There are substantial differences in social concern across communities and societies (e.g., Bernard, 1990; Dovidio et al., 2006; Haidt, 2012; Henrich et al., 2001; Piff et al., 2010). For example, although most people tend to share in games that offer the possibility for sharing and self-interested behavior, people in some societies share significantly more on average than those in others. This is partly because of cultural differences, particularly norms and values regarding social concern (Bowles and Gintis, 2011; Dovidio et al., 2006; Penner et al., 2005). "Collectivist" societies place more emphasis on social harmony and the subordination of individual interests to those of the group, whereas "individualistic" societies place more emphasis on the unrestrained pursuit of individual interests. And evidence indicates that people in collectivist societies, such as those of East Asia, are higher in certain aspects of social concern, such as compassion and the need for social approval (Goetz, Keltner, and Simon-Thomas, 2010; Haidt, 2012; Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmelmeier, 2002; Twenge and Im, 2007)....

These cultural differences are at least partly rooted in the social and economic organization of societies. As critical and other theorists have stated, "market societies" are organized such that individuals are encouraged to compete with others for personal economic gain (e.g., Bonger, 1969; Currie, 1997; Hagan et al., 1998; Henrich et al., 2001; Karstedt and Farrall, 2006; Messner, 2012; Messner and Rosenfeld, 2007). In the words of Currie (1997: 164), such

societies breed a "'culture of callousness,' in which concern for the well-being of other people becomes steadily attenuated." …

Finally, societies with high levels of strain tend to be lower in aspects of social concern. Such strain includes high levels of inequality, which promotes a focus on self-interest and increases the likelihood that others will be viewed as dissimilar and so unworthy of social concern (Nowak and Highfield, 2011: 232–3). And, as Maier-Katkin, Mears, and Bernard (2009) argued in their discussion of crimes against humanity, intense and widespread societal strain—caused by such things as deprivation, oppression, and military occupation—fosters strong identification with small ingroups and an "us versus them" orientation, such that social concern is not extended to many others. In fact, others often are dehumanized and demonized.

In sum, social concern is both a biological and a social product, and it is most likely when those with a strong biological predisposition for social concern are in environments conducive to concern.

A Theory of Social Concern and Crime

Effects of Social Concern on Crime

1. *Social Concern Has a Direct, Negative Effect on Crime*. Those high in social concern care about others, desire strong emotional and cooperative ties to them, possess certain moral intuitions (e.g., do not harm innocent others), and have a strong need to conform. These characteristics should *directly* reduce the likelihood of most crimes, particularly those viewed as harmful, immoral, or deviant. Interpersonal acts of violence and theft are especially likely to have these characteristics.... Crimes with these characteristics threaten ties to others and run directly counter to the other inclinations for social concern. As such, those high in social concern should not consider engaging in such crimes, or if considered, they should be more likely to refrain from them—motivated by emotions such as compassion and guilt.
2. *Social Concern Has an Indirect, Negative Effect on Crime Through Its Impact on Social and Self-control, Strain, and Association with Criminal Others*. The inclinations that comprise social concern foster the formation of strong social bonds with conventional others such as parents. They also make people more amenable to the socialization and control efforts of these others. These effects, in turn, contribute to the internalization of moral beliefs and the development of self-control. Furthermore, those high in social concern are less likely to provoke negative treatment from others, reducing their strain. Finally, they should be less likely to associate with criminal others, who engage in behaviors they condemn.
3. *Social Concern Conditions the Effect of Other Causes on Crime*. Strain, low control, and opportunities for crime should be less likely to lead to crime among those high in social concern. The same is true for association with criminal peers, with respect to those aspects of social concern involving care for others and the moral intuitions. (Association with criminal peers, however, should be more likely to lead to crime among those who desire close ties to others and have a strong inclination to conform [see Miller, 2010, for supportive evidence].) Because social concern provides a restraint against crime, it reduces the likelihood that individuals will respond to provocations and temptations with crime....
4. *Social Concern Partly Mediates the Effect of Biological and Social-Psychological Causes on Crime*. As discussed, the experience and expression of social concern is affected by biological *and* social factors, with the social factors including variables associated with strain, social learning, control, and support theories. As such, social concern also should act as a mediating variable, partly explaining the effect of these variables on crime. In particular, these variables should affect crime partly through their impact on aspects of social concern, such as empathy and the moral intuitions....
5. *Social Concern Partly Mediates the Effect of Macro-Level Causes on Crime, Including Sociodemographic, Community, and Societal Factors*. As noted, certain sociodemographic groups, communities, and societies are lower in average levels of social concern. This may be the case, for example, with very poor, inner-city communities, which are high in strain, low in control, and more likely to contain criminal peer groups. The lower levels of concern in such communities should partly explain their higher crime rates. This is not only because socially concerned people are less likely to engage in crime, but also because they are more likely to work toward the reduction of crime in others....

Research on These Propositions

Social concern has not received much attention in criminology, with the notable exception of moral beliefs regarding crime and, to a lesser extent, empathy/sympathy....

Criminologists usually conceptualize and measure moral beliefs in a narrow manner, with researchers focusing on the extent to which individuals disapprove of particular crimes. The moral intuitions, as described earlier, are much broader in scope. Most research finds that moral beliefs or the disapproval of crime has a strong negative relationship with crime....

Criminologists have devoted much less attention to the effect of empathy/sympathy on crime, with most of the research here having been conducted by psychologists (although see Broidy et al., 2003; Jolliffe and Farrington, 2004, 2007, 2010). Although the research results are somewhat mixed, empathy/sympathy seems to have a moderate negative association with crime and related behaviors.... Empathy/sympathy and related concepts also help explain certain group differences in crime, including gender differences (Broidy et al., 2003; Hagan et al., 1998; McGinley and Carlo, 2007; Morash, 1983)....

Other aspects of social concern have been neglected by criminologists, although certain studies suggest that the needs for close ties to others and for social approval, as well as the related need to conform, may be negatively related to crime (Crowne and Marlowe, 1964; Goff and Goddard, 1999)....

Circumstantial Variation in the Effects of Social Concern

6.1 *Social Concern Has a Weaker Effect on Crime When Individuals/Groups Are Interacting with Those Perceived as Outgroup Members. Relatedly, Crime Will Be More Likely in Circumstances Involving Interactions with Outgroup Members*. Behavior is more strongly motivated by self-interest when individuals interact with outgroup members, although social concern may have a small effect here. And crime should be more likely in such circumstances given the reduced relevance of social concern....

6.2 *Social Concern Has Little Effect on or Increases Crime When Individuals/Groups Believe that Others Have Violated the Inclinations Comprising Social Concern*. Showing concern for those who violate the inclinations is not adaptive; in fact, it invites exploitation and injury. Consequently, individuals show little concern for those who demonstrate a lack of empathy/sympathy, reject or refuse to cooperate with others, violate the moral intuitions, and deviate. Furthermore, individuals are inclined to sanction such others, even at some cost to themselves. Such sanction may take the form of crime if legal options for sanction are unavailable....

6.3 *Social Concern Has a Weaker Effect on Crime When Individuals/Groups Are Competing over Scarce Resources, and Crime Will Be More Likely in Such Circumstances*. Behavior is more strongly motivated by self-interest when there is competition over scarce resources.... Anderson (1999) provided some support for this claim in his ethnography of a deprived, inner-city community, where there is fierce competition for status and economic resources.... Expressions of social concern, such as mercy and forgiveness, are discouraged and rare, particularly among the young males most heavily involved in status competitions. When social concern is expressed, it is taken as a sign of weakness and invites exploitation by others. And crime is quite high in such circumstances. Other accounts also suggest that social concern suffers during competitions over scarce resources and crime increases (e.g., Short and Strodtbeck, 1965). Papachristos (2009), for example, demonstrated that gang violence in Chicago is more frequent when gangs are competing for status and dominance, particularly gangs with overlapping turfs.

6.4 *Social Concern Has a Weaker Effect on Crime When the Costs of Acting on Social Concern Are High, the Benefits Are Low, and/or the Ability to Act on Concern Is Low. And Crime Should Be More Likely in Such Circumstances*. Given that behavior is influenced by both self-interest and social concern, individuals are less likely to act on their concern when the costs of doing so are high and the benefits are low....

6.5 *Social Concern Has a Weaker Effect on Crime When Strain Is High, Social Bonds Are Weak, and Individuals Are in the Company of Criminal Others*. As indicated, severe strain, weak bonds to others, and association with criminals reduce both the inclinations for and the expression of social concern. Among other things, severe strain leads individuals to focus on their own distress and distrust others. Low control, particularly weak bonds to others, reduces the likelihood that one will view others as worthy of concern. And association with criminal peers reduces the likelihood that social concern will be modeled and differentially reinforced. Strains, bonds, and associations vary both over the long term and across circumstances (see Agnew, 2006). So individuals should be less likely to experience and express social concern in circumstances characterized by severe strain, weak bonds, and criminal association.

7. *Circumstantial Factors Are Less Relevant to Those High in "Universal Social Concern," with Universal Social Concern Having a Strong Negative Effect on Crime*. While there are circumstances where social concern has little effect on or increases crime, the relevance of these circumstances varies across individuals and groups. Social concern may be severely circumscribed for some. Concern may be limited to a small number of ingroup members and quickly put aside when others are viewed in a negative light; when others are perceived as competitors; where there is some cost to acting on concern; and/or when strain is high, bonds are weak, or criminal others are present. Other individuals, however, may come close to possessing what might be called universal social concern. Their concern extends to numerous others, including those commonly seen as outgroup members, and circumstantial factors have little effect on their level and expression of concern....

Conclusion

The assumption that people are naturally self-interested is at the core of most crime theories and crime-control initiatives. But a wealth of recent research has indicated that human nature is more complex: People are both self-interested *and* socially concerned. Furthermore, there is individual, demographic, and circumstantial variation in social concern. As argued in this article, this new view of human nature has fundamental implications for criminology. It means that we cannot take the motivation for crime for granted; rather, we must consider those factors that weaken or cause individuals to act against their social concern. Such factors are the focus of strain and certain other theories. Also, variation in the inclinations for social concern should be a central focus of criminology, with these inclinations having direct, indirect, mediating, and conditioning effects on crime....

If future research indicates that social concern has a meaningful impact on crime, policy implications should be explored. Most efforts to control crime focus on the restraint of self-interest, including efforts to increase the certainty and severity of sanctions, instill self-control, and foster social control. That is, such efforts try to control the "bad" in people. Although we certainly should not abandon these efforts, it may be useful to place more emphasis on fostering social concern or cultivating the "good" in people. Social concern can be enhanced in several ways. It can be directly taught, either by trained professionals or by equipping parents, teachers, and others with the appropriate knowledge and skills. And several programs have successfully taught moral beliefs and increased levels of empathy/sympathy (e.g., Eisenberg, Eggum, and Di Giunta, 2010). Relatedly, individuals can be placed in programs that encourage and reward those inclinations that comprise social concern. For example, data suggest that participating in volunteer programs reduces crime, at least partly by fostering empathy/sympathy (McGinley and Carlo, 2007; Penner et al., 2005: 379–89; Uggen and Janikula, 1999). Likewise, participation in restorative justice programs fosters empathy (Braithwaite, 2002). (Other criminal justice responses, such as imprisonment, may reduce empathy/sympathy [Jolliffe and Farrington, 2007])....

In sum, criminologists need to expand what is perhaps their core assumption, recognizing that individuals are not simply self-interested, but they are both self-interested *and* socially concerned. As described in this article, social concern has fundamental implications for both the causes and control of crime.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Agnew argue that social concern is distinct from the trait of self-control?
2. Why does Agnew argue that social concern is part of "human nature"?
3. It has been suggested that growing up and living in very poor, inner-city communities may inhibit social concern. Why might this be the case?
4. Why might an individual's level of social concern influence his or her levels of strain, social control, and social learning for crime? For example, do you think individuals who are low in social concern are more likely to have weak bonds to family, to experience problems at school, and to associate with delinquent peers?
5. Can you imagine any conditions under which social concern or the components of social concern might increase crime?

List of Illustrations

Figure 4.1 The Basic Systemic Model of Crime.

Figure 6.1 A Conceptual Model of Cultural Adaptation and Constraint on Action

Figure 9.1 Social Structure and Social Learning

Figure 19.1 Summary of the Theory of Reintegrative Shaming

Figure 29.1 The Impact of Concentrated Incarceration on Poor Communities and Crime (the figure shows coercive mobility—the impact of incarceration on communities)

Figure 31.1 Our Theory of African American Offending

Figure 33.1 Initial Involvement Model (example: burglary in a middle-class suburb)

Figure 33.2 Event Model (example: burglary in a middle-class suburb)

Figure 33.3 Continuing Involvement Model (example: burglary in a middle-class suburb)

Figure 33.4 Desistance Model (example: burglary in a middle-class suburb)

Figure 38.1 Proximal and Proprietary Places

Figure 38.2 The Crime Triangle

Figure 43.1 Hypothetical Illustration of the Changing Prevalence of Participation in Antisocial Behavior Across the Life Course (The solid line represents the known curve of crime over age. The arrows represent the duration of participation in antisocial behavior by individuals)

Figure 46.1

Figure 47.1 The Basic Situational Model

Figure 48.1 The Impact of Climate Change on Crime

List of Tables

Table 1 A Brief Reader's Guide to Criminological Theory

Table 11.1 Typology of Adaptations

Table 23.1 An Integrated Theoretical Model of State-Corporate Crime

Table 36.1 Incident-Specific Risk Rates for Rape, Robbery, Assault and Personal Larceny with Contact, United States, 1974

Table 38.1. How Place Managers Differ From Other Controllers

Table 38.2 Levels of Place Management at Two Different Facility Types

Table 38.3 Place Manager Decisions

Table 38.4 CS4– Variety of Crime-Involved Proprietary Places

Table 39.1 Applicability of Opportunity Theories to Crime Patterns at Various Levels of Analysis

Table 42.1 MPQ Scale Descriptions and Internal Consistency Coefficients

Table 47.1 What Makes a Particular Moral Action Likely: The Principle of Moral Correspondence and the Role of Controls Illustrated